

THE
PROPHECY
OF
CHRIST'S
DEATH AND PASSION

SERMONS ON ISAIAH 53



JOHN CALVIN

MONERGISM EBOOK

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The following work was fully translated by Claude. It was then thoroughly checked during the editing process to ensure accurate transcription throughout. Even so, please notify us if anything is found to be amiss, and we will work to remedy it as soon as possible.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

In our recent publication, *Sermons on the Song of King Hezekiah*, we included an editorial notice from volume 35 of the *Calvini Opera*, which included some background information on John Calvin's Isaiah sermons. These sermons on Isaiah 52:12-53:12 are also included in the same volume of *Calvini Opera*. Having used Claude to generate the translation, we have entitled this edition *The Prophecy of Christ's Death and Passion: Sermons on Isaiah 53*.

PRELIMINARY NOTICE

Besides the four sermons on part of the thirty-eighth chapter of Isaiah which have just been read, there exist seven others on the fifty-third chapter of the same prophet. We do not know whether they were ever published separately; however, we suppose that they were first published in the volume we are about to describe, in which they appear following a good many other sermons on various texts of the New Testament. What leads us to this supposition is the very date of this volume, which is precisely that of Calvin's preaching on the book of the prophet Isaiah, concerning which we have recorded the necessary information in the foreword to the preceding article.

We know of only four copies of the volume in question. We have taken a copy from the one in the library of the Arsenal and collated it with the one at Wolfenbüttel.

Here now is Badius's very interesting preface:

**TO THE FAITHFUL SCATTERED IN SEVERAL LANDS,
CONRAD BADIUS WISHES GRACE AND BLESSING THROUGH**

JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR.

We know what the pride of the sect of the Pharisees was like — how, although they were full of darkness and ignorance, they nevertheless boasted of being great expositors of the Law, going so far as to take their very name from it, as if they held in their bosom the marrow and the secret sense of Scripture. Yet instead of feeding the simple people with true and sound doctrine, they trained them in I know not what foolish trifles and vain ceremonies which they invented beyond the word of God. Our great Sorbonne doctors do the same in our time, and all these ranting friars — of whom some, though they reckon themselves the pillars of the Church, companions of the Apostles, and the very workshop of the Holy Spirit where all interpretation of Scripture and resolution of every point of religion must be sought, nevertheless do nothing but tell vain and foolish fables, or busy themselves with curious questions full of sophistry and a thousand subtleties which serve no edification at all. Others preach, instead of the word of God, the constitutions and ordinances which they themselves have made to establish the tyranny of the Pope, the true Antichrist and enemy of the truth. Others again foam at the mouth in the pulpit and belch out arrogant words against the children of God and those to whom Jesus Christ has revealed himself in these latter times, calling them Lutherans, seditious men, and inventing a thousand lies against them — instead of nourishing with the true pasture of the word of God their poor starving sheep, who drink in such poisons in place of the spiritual food of their souls.

Wherefore, my brothers, beloved in Jesus Christ, when God sends us some good and faithful teacher who purely expounds the word of God to his hearers, we ought to hold him in wonderful esteem; for there are very few

who faithfully discharge their office. And among others we ought to hold in special regard those whom God has endowed with special graces and the gift of interpretation — as today our faithful Pastor and good servant of God, John Calvin, makes great profit of the precious talent he has received from the Lord, as his preaching bears good witness (as all fair-minded persons may judge), being in no way perfunctory or done by rote, but carefully premeditated and well suited to the capacity of his sheep, always keeping before his eyes the benefit of the Lord Jesus, so as to engrave it vividly in their hearts. These are not commonplaces all chewed over beforehand, nor sermons kept up his sleeve to be made to fit any passage of Scripture, as a single last fits every foot; rather they are true, pure, plain expositions proper to the text he has to expound. He does not stuff them with exhortations beside the point; he does not fill them with invectives proceeding from ambition. For although we have great need that the superstitions of the Papacy be daily assailed by the word of God, so as to efface them from our hearts — like a strong odour with which we have been steeped since our infancy — yet if the passage is not directly against such abuses, he will not depart from his exposition to cry out against them, as the Papists at every turn and without occasion bark like mastiffs against the Gospel renewed in these latter days in the world; but his custom is to follow a thread and a continuous course tending toward edification, omitting nothing that serves the honour of God and the instruction of his hearers.

Would to God there were many like him! The poor Church of Jesus Christ would be greatly relieved by it; but I do not doubt that our own ingratitude hinders God from sending more faithful Pastors than there are at present. For if any are found who wish plainly to discharge their office and to cut the word of God straight (as St. Paul commands), reproving vices and

opposing evil in order to maintain the honour of him by whom they are sent, at once they are charged with rage, and men never cease to bark after them and to slander them. Indeed, the very man of whom I speak, for his sincerity and the great faithfulness he brings to the execution of his charge, has acquired so many enemies that even those who never saw or heard him, and never read two words of his works, wish him dead. But thanks be to God, his good conscience and the witness he has before God and his Angels, and of the faithful who hear him daily, that it is wrongfully he is thus ill spoken of by men, give him courage to pursue steadfastly the work of the Lord. He sees how his Master was treated, and after him the Apostles; thus, it does him no harm to walk in their steps, knowing that God is powerful to keep his deposit, and that those will be counted worthy of the Kingdom of heaven who suffer for it.

Now, since not all can have their dwelling in this Church so as to partake of the heavenly pasture which this good shepherd has for twenty years now ceaselessly administered — and since it is expedient that those newly coming to this charge should see his manner of teaching, in order to follow it; likewise also that those who think he does nothing but speak evil and cry out in the pulpit against the Pope and his people, and thunder against their traditions, without otherwise expounding Scripture, or who think he does nothing but induce people to a carnal liberty and to throw off the yoke of Kings and Princes and all subjection, should read his sermons, so that they may see how greatly wrong it is that such blame is laid upon him, and so as to remove the bad opinion they have conceived of him — several good persons have been of the mind to have some quantity of them printed, and in particular Laurent de Normandie, whose zeal and holy conduct is well enough known here, who for the past ten years has ceaselessly employed all

his effort and his means in having books printed for the edification of the Church.

It is true (as I have already given to understand in the preface to the sermons on the Decalogue) that this is neither by the will nor the consent of the author — not that he wishes to hinder the good and the fruit the Church may receive from it, but he would wish that his sermons should not extend beyond his own flock, both because they are made specially for his sheep, to whose capacity he accommodates himself as much as he can, and because it seems to him that a different order and arrangement would be required for them to be thus set before the eyes of all the world. But as for reviewing them to polish them — quite apart from his not having the leisure — he would never wish to occupy himself with that. For if he wished to put out sermons, he well knows how to make entirely new homilies, better worked out, without reworking something he has already delivered on the spot. Nevertheless, seeing the great fruit that may come from such sermons thus published, we have not feared to displease him and to disobey him somewhat in this matter, in order to make you partakers of the excellent riches which we enjoy in this little corner, hated and detested by the world as pernicious and accursed, but precious nonetheless before God. It is true that what has given us this boldness is the liberality of our magnificent and much-honoured Lords, who, desiring the advancement of the Church of God, have given us permission and privilege to print them.

Now, seeing that among so great a quantity of them as have been gathered we had to make a choice, we thought it good to put forward some small number, so that according as they are well received by you, more may be produced. Here then is the order we have followed. In the first place we have put a Congregation on the beginning of the Gospel according to St.

John, where the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is amply treated. Now by this word Congregation I mean a certain assembly of the Church held on one of the days of the week, where each of the Ministers in his turn expounds some passage of Scripture, more in the manner of a lesson than of a sermon; and this done, if there is anyone among the others to whom the Spirit of God has revealed something bearing on the understanding and clarification of what has been set forth, he is free to speak. After that we have added a sermon for Christmas Day concerning the Nativity of Jesus Christ. Then we have added the sermons on his passion and death, on his resurrection and ascension, on the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, and on the first address of St. Peter after having received the Holy Spirit. Finally, we have added a sermon in which the last coming of Jesus Christ is treated. After which, thinking to bring this book to a close, it pleased God to let us hear the most excellent sermons that it is possible to hear or recite, on the end of the fifty-second chapter of the Prophet Isaiah and on the whole of the fifty-third, where the mystery of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and its causes, are so described and depicted to the life, that it seems the Holy Spirit wished to set before our eyes Jesus Christ condemned in our name and fastened to the cross for our sins, so that, suffering the punishment that was due to us, and bearing for us the wrath and judgment of God, he might deliver us from eternal death. These sermons seemed to us so fitting to accompany those we have placed here that we could not help joining them to these, so as not to deprive you of so great a good.

For the rest, we have taken care to choose as much as we could the sermons preached on the days when the Holy Supper of the Lord is celebrated in this Church, both because they generally have somewhat

greater vehemence, and because the point of this Sacrament is always clarified in them — a point over which there are today more contentions and controversies in the world than over any other. And for this same reason we have resolved to present to you next the Sermons this good Doctor has made on the tenth and eleventh chapters of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, where the true institution of the Supper is clearly shown, and the corruption and abuse that have since arisen are vigorously refuted. Furthermore, because the two Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and the one to Titus are, so to speak, the household management of the Church — that is, containing the state and government of it, and how each person in particular ought to conduct himself in his office — now that the Lord in his mercy is spreading the rays of his Gospel light in many places, we hope to publish the sermons that have been preached on these three Epistles. And also because grace through Jesus Christ, and the setting at naught of the merit of human works, are excellently treated in the Epistle to the Galatians, we hope to present to you the sermons made on it — a thing as necessary in this time as any other. And if we perceive that such gifts are pleasing to you, we will spare no means that God gives us to make you partakers of several others.

Meanwhile, my beloved brothers, pursue your course happily, and do not be terrified by the threats and cruelties of tyrants, who think today to do God service by persecuting Jesus Christ in his members. Set before yourselves that incorruptible crown and everlasting joy which is prepared for you if you persevere steadfastly and to the end in your holy calling, knowing that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed — to which may we come through Jesus Christ our Saviour. So be it.

There exists of this same collection another, somewhat more recent edition. But we have not encountered any copy of it in the numerous public libraries whose catalogues we have examined or concerning which we have been furnished with information. We ourselves possess one — perhaps the only one still in existence, or at least the only one we know of.

TITLE PAGE

**SERMONS ON THE PROPHECY OF CHRIST, CONCERNING HIS
DEATH AND PASSION: TAKEN FROM ISAIAH**

FIRST SERMON

Isaiah, Chapter LII

13. Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted, he shall be lifted up, he shall be raised very high. 14. As many were astonished at thee, because thy visage was more marred than any man's, and thy form more than the sons of men — 15. so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Chapter LIII

1. Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

The Prophet, having spoken in general of the whole people of the Jews, now comes to the Head on whom all that he has said above depended. For their redemption was founded on nothing other than our Lord Jesus Christ, just as it is in him that all the promises of God are fulfilled. Now the

Redeemer had already been promised long before; but when it seemed that the line of David was quite extinguished, the hope of the faithful might likewise have been abolished. It had been said that God would always establish a King and seat him on the throne of David, and that as long as there was sun and moon in heaven, that Kingdom would be maintained and preserved; and that even if the whole world should perish, there would be there such firmness that one would clearly see it was a Kingdom wholly dedicated to God. Yet it dwindled away; indeed, soon after, and little by little, it fell into decay, until the second-to-last king was led away captive, and the whole royal line was carried off and virtually cut off. The last, made king at the pleasure of an unbelieving man, an enemy of all religion, and finally having rebelled against him, was seized, his eyes put out, put on trial, his children slaughtered, and he was condemned amid every disgrace; the Temple and all the houses were burned. What could one make of all this? The Jews needed to be assured by the Prophet that God would in the end have pity on them, and that he would bring them back from their captivity; he needed to show them that what had been said long ago to Abraham was not vain — that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed — but that there would be a King seated of the line of David, whose Empire would have no end, but would be eternal. This is why Isaiah now restricts his discourse to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that (I say) what he has declared above concerning the redemption and the return of the people might be held as certain and infallible.

Now we have seen above that our Lord was called the Servant of God, inasmuch as he submitted himself in all obedience for the sake of our salvation — he who was the Lord of glory, the head of the Angels, before whom every knee ought to bow. When, then, this name of Servant is

attributed to him, let us recognise that it is because he clothed himself in our nature, and that in it he was willing not only to humble himself but to empty himself utterly. For it was necessary that our transgressions and iniquities be repaired by his obedience. And as he also said to John the Baptist, it was necessary that he fulfil all righteousness. Thus, we see how our Lord Jesus Christ, although all majesty belongs to him and he is the eternal God, does not therefore fail, in the time when he clothed himself with our flesh and conformed himself to us, to be in a lower degree; in this there is no contradiction. For although in his divine nature nothing was changed, yet if we consider him as mediator between God and us, it is necessary that he abase himself, as it is also said that he was made under the Law, although he was in no way a debtor to it, and was himself he who must govern it, and to whom all subjection is due; but he placed himself in that rank in order to set us free from the yoke that was unbearable to us. For the Law was a burden to overwhelm us, except insofar as our Lord Jesus bore it and thereby freed us from it. And we ought not to find it strange that he is called the Servant of God, seeing that he did not refuse to be ours as well — which is far more. For if we look at our condition, there is nothing but vanity; we are poor worms of the earth, the devil and sin even dominate over us; and yet behold the only Son of God abasing himself to the point of employing himself in our service, as St. Paul speaks of it: he is (he says) a minister of the circumcision. Moreover, the Prophet has notably used this word so that we may know that all that is here recounted of him is for the good and the common salvation of the whole Church. Now we must consider to what Jesus Christ was called: namely, to be the Redeemer of all the faithful and all the elect of God. Since, then, this charge was committed to him, and such is his calling, let us not doubt that all that is declared of his person is

common to us, and that we shall derive profit from what we shall see hereafter. So much, then, for the Prophet's intention.

Now he says that Jesus Christ, being called to this office of saving all his own, shall prosper, that he shall be exalted and marvellously magnified. This is to arm the faithful against the temptation they might have had before Jesus Christ appeared in his glory and majesty — that is, before he who is the eternal God, full of glory, was manifested in flesh. For when the Jews are carried away to Babylon (as we have already said), there is no more dignity in the line of David; all of it is scraped away. It is true that when some portion returns, there is Zerubbabel, who is held as captain and chief; but there is no royal diadem, there is only some reputation of honour, inasmuch as the people still retain some reverence toward this house of David. Behold, I say, Zerubbabel who is obeyed — yes, but there is no appearance of an Empire in it. The faithful therefore needed to be fortified against such a temptation, and God needed to assure them that the Redeemer would come forth, and that even if the earth should have to open, and all the abysses to give him passage and to lift him on high, nevertheless the thing must come to pass. Thus there is no doubt that the Prophet here draws a comparison between two opposite things: that Jesus Christ must for a long time be as it were hidden, indeed plunged into the depths of the abysses, and even when he came, that he would have no great pomp to be prized by men, but quite the contrary — that he would be rejected, or that he would be so contemptible that one would think the salvation of the people could never be accomplished by his means — and yet that he shall be exalted.

And this is expressed still more fully when the Prophet says that he was more marred than any man, and that no form was recognised in him — as if

he were not worthy to be counted among created things, but was to be held as detestable, and men would have horror even at the sight of him. Behold, then, what the Prophet intends when he says that Jesus Christ is exalted. These are two things which at first sight would seem contrary, and would be held incompatible: namely, that Jesus Christ should not be known, that he should be sought and not be found, and that when he is seen, he should be rejected, that nothing worthy of any esteem should be found in him — and yet that God exalts him, magnifies him, and lifts him up so that he surpasses all we can conceive of his majesty in this world. One would not say these two things could be reconciled any more than fire and water; and yet the Prophet says we must hope that God will so work that these small beginnings will not prevent the perfection from reaching its goal. And this is also why he says that he shall be lifted up, that he shall be exalted and marvellously advanced on high — for this temptation was difficult to overcome. And it is not enough that God declares to us in a word what he intends to do; when we perceive resistances, and it seems that what God has spoken is impossible, we must be confirmed; we must have that with which to overcome all that could be objected, and all that might hinder us from giving credence to the promise of God. It is thus as if the Prophet said: My friends, wait for God to lift up the Redeemer, for he will do it. And if we reply, Yes, but how? for the means seem too strange — do not doubt it, for there is a power in God that is hidden from you; but (whatever the case) if you doubt, if you waver, if you enter into dispute, when this word alone does not suffice you, resist all these imaginations, take heart, defy all your unbelief, and hold to this resolve — that whatever happens, God will work beyond your expectation, beyond your opinion and your senses.

This, then, is what the Prophet intended in using these three words — indeed four — which signify one and the same thing. And he shows it well in saying that he was disfigured, and that no one deigned to look upon him, because there was neither beauty nor form in him, but that he was as one cut off from all company of men, and not worthy to be numbered among mortal creatures. Now this will be still more fully declared in what follows, for this same statement will be repeated for fuller explanation. But whatever the case, the Prophet already shows that the Jews, in awaiting their Redeemer, needed to close their eyes to all that men are accustomed to look for, and to give place to faith, so as to hold themselves certain of the goodness of God, however much everything ran contrary to their opinion. And this is said not only of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, but of the whole course of his Gospel and of the entire order he maintains in governing his faithful. If, then, we wish to be assured of our salvation in Jesus Christ, we must first not be ashamed that he was thus disfigured in the eyes of men, and that, being sent into the world, he was held as execrable and accursed; and then further that his Gospel too has been exposed to all manner of reproach, as we still see the like today.

For if we are ashamed to receive our Lord Jesus Christ crucified, it is certain that we are excluded from all hope of salvation. For how are we saved by him? How does the inheritance of heaven belong to us, except that he was made a curse for us, and was not only cursed before men but from the mouth of God his Father? Behold how Jesus Christ, who is the fountain of all blessing, nevertheless bore our sins, and was made like the ancient sacrifices which were called Sin-offerings, because it was necessary that the wrath of God be declared there, so that men might be delivered and absolved from it. And how is Jesus Christ our life, except in that he

swallowed up death by dying? And how are we lifted up by him, except in that he descended even to the abysses of hell — that is, he bore the horrors that were upon us because of our sin, and by which we would have been overwhelmed? For it was necessary that we should always have had God for our judge, and it is a thing more dreadful than anything else that God should be against us. It was necessary that Jesus Christ should there enter as our surety, the one who was to pay for us and to bear our condemnation in order to absolve us from it. Thus let us not find it strange when we see that he was thus disfigured; and if this is folly to our understanding, let us know (as St. Paul says) that the foolishness of God surpasses all the wisdom of the world.

He calls it the foolishness of God that our Lord Jesus was thus cast down; for if men wish to sit in judgment here, it is certain they will say it is an absurd thing. What? That he who ought to be adored in heaven and on earth should be exposed to such reproach? And to what purpose? Thus, according to their arrogance and presumption, men will always condemn — with a boldness and audacity as great as anything — all that God does for their redemption; but meanwhile God, in his own counsel, will show that he has more wisdom than all men could conceive. And therefore let us in the first place hold this as altogether settled: that if our Lord Jesus was contemptible, and if he not only abased himself for us but utterly emptied himself (as St. Paul speaks of it), we should not fail to attribute to him the honour that belongs to him. For his glory was not diminished by this, although it was not known to all; rather his goodness had all the greater lustre for it. And we ought also to be seized with wonder, seeing that the Son of God did not refuse to be as it were disfigured — he who is as the image of God his Father — and all this so that this image might be repaired

in us. For it is certain that we are so filled with blemishes that, appearing before God, we must be rejected, until our Lord Jesus imprints his mark upon us, by which we may come to be pleasing to God and to find favour before him. Thus, when we are told that he was disfigured, let us look to ourselves, and recognise that it was necessary that he receive all our blots and blemishes, so that we might be purged and cleansed of them, and that now we might bring to the judgment of God nothing but justice and holiness, which we would not have unless God communicated it to us in Jesus Christ.

Now hereupon he adds that even the kings shall shut their mouths when he has thus been exalted, and when they see such a change as men would never have thought. Here he shows that we ought not to judge rashly when we see that our Lord Jesus thus humbled and even annihilated himself, but that we must look to the end, and to what God the Father has brought him — namely, that a Name has been given to him sovereign above all, so that every knee must bow before him, as St. Paul speaks in the second chapter of Philippians. For when he exhorted us to modesty, and showed that we ought not to esteem ourselves highly, he sets before us the mirror and pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, says St. Paul, who is true God, and to whom it would not have been robbery had he appeared in his heavenly glory, emptied himself, and took the estate and condition of a servant; and even he willed to be crucified, and did not refuse that death, so ignominious and accursed, both before God and before men — and all this in order to bear upon himself all that was owed by us. Now for this cause, says he, the Father has exalted him and given him such a Name that all creatures must do him homage, both high and low, and all confess that truly he is in the glory of God his Father — and that if we wish to contemplate the majesty

of God, so as to glorify him according as he is worthy, we must come to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Behold, in sum, what the Prophet meant to say: that we should not let the fact that he was abased for a time close the door to our believing in Jesus Christ and setting our whole heart on him — but that we must consider what the end of it was, and when we speak of his death, that we should come immediately to his resurrection and join the two together, as being two things inseparable — that Jesus Christ willed to suffer in the infirmity he had taken from us, and that he is risen in the power of his Holy Spirit — and that in this he declared himself the true Son of God, as St. Paul speaks of it both in the first Epistle to Timothy and in the second to the Corinthians, and again in the first chapter of Romans. And this is also what the Prophet intended in this passage. Now we have said that this is seen not only in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ but also in his Gospel. For how was Jesus Christ known, and what obedience did the world render him, when the Gospel was preached? We see that those to whom he had given all authority were not only mocked and condemned by men, but beaten and scourged, and finally put to a shameful death. Since this is so, let us surmount such scandals, and, being armed with what is said here by the Prophet, let us look to the end to which our Lord Jesus has come, so as to close the mouth — that is, so that men may be astonished and have no reply — even as we see unbelievers still chattering on. Yet this is so, and they can never come to our Lord Jesus Christ to do him homage, because in their own eyes they have some reason, as it seems to them, to argue against it.

But we are told here that when we look well at what our Lord Jesus has attained, and what has been the end and the fruit of his death and passion, which he endured for our salvation, then our mouth shall be closed. For

when Scripture speaks thus, it signifies a wholly settled and composed consideration of the works of God. For while men keep their mouths open (as has already been touched on) they wish to enter into dispute; they wish to argue back and forth, so that God is set aside there, and all that he has done is as it were rejected. But when it is said that every mouth is silenced to keep silence before God, it is to show that we must have all our senses subdued and captive, indeed our tongues bridled, so as peaceably to confess that God deserves to be glorified in the person of his only Son. And if this is said of kings, what shall it be of the common people? We must, then, well retain the order that the Prophet sets forth here; for he warns us that our Lord Jesus needed to be as it were disfigured, and that the world would reject him. Since, then, we are forewarned of this by the Holy Spirit, let us not find it strange, and let us not fail to embrace him with true faith; and although at first sight his cross (which is a detestable gibbet in the eyes of men) might turn us away and estrange us wholly from him, let us nevertheless not fail to seek there all our glory — that is, in Jesus Christ crucified. And for the rest, let us not stop at what he suffered, so as to conceive in him only this ignominy to which he voluntarily submitted for us — but let us join his resurrection with his death, and know that, being crucified, he nonetheless sits as Lieutenant of God his Father, to exercise sovereign Empire and to have all power both in heaven and on earth. And this is why it is said that he shall be exalted. It is true that his being lifted up on the gibbet was, in the eyes of men, a reproach; but nevertheless he mocks the devil and defies the whole world, saying that he shall indeed be exalted, and that when he has been exposed to such ignominy, when everyone has stuck out their tongue at him and vomited forth their blasphemies and vile insults against him, nonetheless he is seated on his

throne, as we have already cited from the passage of St. Paul. And in another place he says notably that the cross, though beforehand it was a gibbet full of shame, has become like a triumphal chariot, and that Jesus Christ not only conquered the devil there, but showed that we may now glory, in that we are now absolved from all condemnation — that sin has no more power over us, and that all the devils of hell are cast out of all they might claim against us.

Behold, then, in sum, how by faith we must rise up to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we are not ashamed to seek our salvation in his cross, our blessing in his curse, our life in his death, and then our glory in his having been exposed to such ignominy, and our joy in his having had such anguish that he sweat blood and water because of it. Behold in sum what we must retain from this passage. Now the Prophet notably says that he shall sprinkle. It is true that by way of similitude this word can also mean “to cause to speak”; but on close examination one finds that the natural sense intended by the Prophet is that Jesus Christ shall sprinkle all nations — that is, although he be a dry and sterile stump of wood, nevertheless the whole world shall be watered by his power. In short, he shows that God will work in an incomprehensible way, and that the Jews should not expect any human means, but should hope that God would surmount all that men can think. For when we are told of miracles, our senses must fail us; and when we are told of mysteries — that is, of secrets — we must recognise that we are not competent judges or arbiters, to say, “It must be so,” but that we have to adore what cannot enter into our heads, and whose reason is unknown to us. This, then, is what we must further retain. Now this admonition belongs to us today, that (as I have already said) we should suffer ourselves to be watered by our Lord Jesus Christ;

and although he appeared as it were sterile, and nothing worthy of esteem was found in him, yet when he presents himself to us, and wishes to draw near, let us not repel him by our unbelief, but rather give him access by faith. Behold in sum what we must retain of this teaching of the Prophet.

And furthermore, he adds how the whole world shall be sprinkled by our Lord Jesus Christ — namely, by the preaching of the Gospel. For those (he says) to whom it had not been told shall see it, and those who had not heard shall understand. Here the Prophet amplifies his discourse, showing that our Lord Jesus would be sent by God his Father not only for the Jews (although he had expressly been promised to them) but that he would be the Saviour of the whole world. That this is indeed the Prophet's meaning, St. Paul declares in the fifteenth chapter of Romans, applying these words to the fact that he was sent among foreign nations and had run to and fro, filling every region with the Gospel, where God had never before been spoken of — and that he preached not only among the Jews but also among the Gentiles. We see, then, what the Prophet intended, and this passage ought to be for us like a key giving us entry into the Kingdom of God.

For if Jesus Christ had been promised only to the line of Abraham, of what profit would he be to us? Even were he Saviour and Redeemer, that would be useless to us; we would have no share or part in it. But since it was foretold so long before he was sent that he would sprinkle all peoples — indeed, that those who beforehand had not understood should understand, and that those to whom it had not been told should hear it — let us recognise that our Lord has adopted us, in that Jesus Christ has come into the world and accomplished what was required and necessary for our salvation; so that the doctrine of the Gospel is now to us like rain to give us heavenly vigour, where we were altogether sterile, and because we are

starved and empty of the race of God, we must receive substance from the doctrine of the Gospel, and feel what the death our Redeemer suffered is worth to us, and how we profit by it, and that his life is the perfection of our righteousness.

Now it is certain that the Prophet did not mean here to speak of the Jews, who from their infancy had been nourished and trained in the Law, but included the foreign nations, who beforehand had nothing but superstitions and idolatries. For the God of Israel was rejected by the whole world; he was despised, and the Gentiles held the true religion in mockery. Now it is said that these shall hear, and having heard, that they shall understand. By these words the Prophet shows whence faith comes, namely from hearing the word of God; but at the same time he signifies also that it is not enough for our ears to be struck by the preaching of the Gospel, unless understanding be joined to it. Now this is not given to all; we must, then, restrict this statement to the elect of God, and to those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit — as he also declares more expressly in what he adds: “Who shall believe our doctrine? And on whom shall the arm of the Lord be revealed, or displayed?” Here the Prophet stops in the midst of his discourse, and, as one astonished and marvelling, cries out. And this is a passage well worthy to be noted. We have seen that he was exhorting the faithful to magnanimity and constancy, as if to say: My friends, do not be dismayed if there is no dignity in your Redeemer, and if he is not prized by the world, but rather everyone spits in his face and despises him, and holds him even in execration — do not for all that be turned away from him. For God had so ordained it; and yet you see the outcome: that, having been drawn up from the abysses of death, he was exalted on high, indeed given authority over all creatures. So then, do not fail to adore this Redeemer who

has thus humbled himself for your good. And indeed he compares him to the rain, and says that God will water those who had never understood anything of the truth, who had been like poor brute beasts. These, he says, shall be taught, and shall be made partakers of the salvation that has been acquired, and the Church of God shall be spread throughout the whole world, so that those who have blasphemed against the pure doctrine shall have their mouths closed, except to confess with all reverence and sobriety that there is none but the God of Israel who ought to be honoured, and that his only Son, in whom is the express Image of his glory and majesty, ought to be received so as to do him homage. Even kings, although blinded by their pride, shall be constrained to humble themselves, and shall be forced to submit in all obedience. Behold the magnificent words the Prophet has spoken.

Now he foresees that when the Gospel shall be preached throughout the world, some will mock it, others will oppose it, others will take no pleasure in it, others will remain stupid, others will hypocritically lie to God and put on some show of obedience to the doctrine, but it will be nothing but false pretence. The Prophet, then, seeing the world so malicious, and foreseeing that God will not be listened to, that his Word will not be received with the reverence it deserves, is filled with wonder, and cries out: Who is it that shall believe our doctrine? As if he said: Alas, I preach here the salvation of the world, and all is desperate and lost unless this remedy be given — namely, that God send his only Son, who, doing battle against the devil and death, thereby acquires for us righteousness and life; for this doctrine must water the whole world, otherwise we are sterile. There is nothing in us but utter dryness and poverty; yet God does not wait for us to ask him to water us, but comes forward, and offers himself freely, and presents to us there his

only Son with his doctrine; and in this he shows himself so gracious that he ought indeed to be received without any contradiction — indeed, ought not everyone to be so inflamed with zeal that he would despise everything else in order to embrace this Redeemer who has appeared?

Yet far from this happening, scarcely a tenth part of those who hear are genuinely touched. And indeed, experience shows that some mock — such as are despisers of God, who have neither faith nor religion any more than dogs, and hold as a fable all that is preached to them of eternal life. Others are not content merely to hold the Word of God in such contempt; they must go further, for they are inflamed with rage and fury against it. On the other hand, there are some who blaspheme with open mouth, others who ask only to hold to what they have conceived in their own brain. Then one will find many stupid folk, who are moved by nothing, and cannot be touched any more than stones; others again, though they have some fine covering of piety, are liars and perjurers, in whom there is nothing but deceit and hypocrisy. We see this; and even if the Prophet had not said it, let us open our eyes, and we will find it fulfilled. And is this not a dreadful thing, a monstrosity against nature? It is certainly so. Now here we might be greatly scandalised, and this might even be like a barrier to hinder us from coming to the Gospel, when we consider what the world does, and say: How can this be? The word of God ought to be the sovereign good and the happiness of men — how is it thus rejected? And how does God suffer men thus to mock him and resist him, and not make himself heard, not gain the credit due to him? Behold how we are tempted not to believe the Gospel — as if the unbelief of men detracted from the truth of God, and diminished the honour that belongs to him.

Thus, not without cause the Prophet Isaiah has inserted this statement. For if he had simply said what we have seen before — that the whole world was to be watered by our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the doctrine of the Gospel was to have its extension everywhere, and that kings would submit themselves to him — now we would say: Oh, it is not for our time that the Prophet Isaiah spoke, for we see quite the opposite; instead of the earth being watered to obtain salvation, we see a flood of all iniquity; we see men as brutalized, with an infernal rebellion, rejecting all that is of God. One sees, in short, that the Gospel is so poorly received that it is a horror. Since this is so, what the Prophet said must not yet be fulfilled. Now this (as I have said) would serve to overturn our faith; but when he joins this statement with what we have seen above — that while God sends the rain to give life to men, he does not grant this special grace of his Holy Spirit to all to receive what he says — but that most will be unbelievers, who will have stopped ears, or will harden themselves and become all the more envenomed toward evil, while others will take no account of the inestimable good that is communicated to them. When, then, the Prophet has declared all these things, and we see them, we ought no longer to be astonished by them, but rather our faith should be confirmed by them.

Behold then, in sum, what we must retain. Let us thus reckon that the world will never be so converted to God that there will not be the greater part possessed by Satan, who will remain stupid there, and who will prefer to perish rather than receive the good that is offered them. And there are various kinds, as we have said: some will be stupid, others will have a haughtiness to mock God, and a foolish presumption to condemn all that is contained in the Gospel; others will be wrapped up in the cares of this world; they will be preoccupied with their own cunning and deceits, so that

they taste nothing of what is of heaven; others will be so brutish that one cannot even enter into their spirit to show them any doctrine. When, then, we see all this, let us reckon that although the Gospel is preached, and the voice of God resounds and echoes everywhere, nevertheless many people will remain as they were, and will not change, and all doctrine will be to them as dead. So much for one point. And thus, we see the number of believers to be small. It remains that for this we should not be discouraged, but rather recognise that God accomplishes what he has pronounced with his mouth. And meanwhile we ought to be all the more careful to gather ourselves as it were under the wings of God, when today the whole world is full of malice and rebellion.

It is true that we ought to be afraid, and must walk in greater watchfulness. For if all were well disposed to serve God, we would have examples on every side sufficient to spur us to apply ourselves valiantly to it on our part; but when it is said that most of those to whom the Gospel is preached will be as devils, and that nowhere will one find anything but debauchery, so that it will seem the world has conspired to alienate us entirely from God — then we have good reason to walk in fear. For if we were not miraculously preserved by God, what would become of us? Thus, whoever wishes to hold fast to the Gospel must be prepared to resist all scandals, and when he does not see others doing their duty, must not for that be turned aside — but when we see the whole world trample the Word of God underfoot, let us be all the more devoted to it, and not only that, but let us take all the more pains to set ourselves in order toward our God when we see that scandals and bad examples might turn us away from him — and let us remain in the integrity to which God calls us.

Behold, then, what we must retain concerning the Prophet's cry here, "Who is it that shall believe our report?" For he presupposes that the number will be sparsely scattered, and that when the Gospel is published everywhere, if one considers how much it has profited, one will find very few who have a living root, who have been reformed and changed, who alter their lives, who renounce themselves to dedicate themselves wholly to God — one will find, I say, that the number of such will be small. But at the same time he adds the cause, which we cannot fully expound now — namely, that we must also note here that faith is a special gift of God, and that it is not enough to have the doctrine, and to have our ears struck by it, but that God must touch us, and work in us by a secret power, so that we are drawn to him, and are edified by the preaching we have heard. But this could not be fully dealt with now, so we will reserve it for another day.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgment of our faults, praying to him, etc.

SECOND SERMON

I saiah, Chapter LIII

1. Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? 2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness, and we have seen that there was nothing to be desired in him. 3. He is despised and rejected among men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, so that men hid their faces from him with contempt, and we esteemed him not. 4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, etc.

We began to treat how, although the Gospel was to be published throughout the whole world, it would nonetheless be very poorly received by the greater part; and how the Prophet declared this so that the children of God should not be dismayed at seeing the unbelief of those whose ears had been struck by the doctrine of salvation, and who nevertheless refused entirely to accept it. For it is a strange thing that God should call men to himself, and

strive to win them in so gentle and gracious a manner as anything could be, and that nevertheless men should turn away from him, and knowingly refuse to come to the salvation thus offered them. It seems this should be impossible; yet we see it nonetheless by experience. This is why the Prophet Isaiah cries out that when God, as it were by trumpet-blast, wishes to publish his Gospel, there will nevertheless be but a small number of believers. He adds the reason: that God must indeed reveal his power, in order to give faith to those who by their natural sense would always be unbelieving. This is the cause why we see so many people reject the Gospel, why there are so many who are disgusted by it and conceive such a scandal at it that they would rather resemble those who thus defy God than approach him peaceably. What is the cause of this, I ask, except that we imagine faith to be within the power of every man? But the Prophet shows us that although God commands his Word to be published to all — that is, to the good and to the bad — nevertheless he works in a secret manner in his elect, as if making them feel his arm and his power. Let us note well, then, that when the Gospel is preached, it will be like a useless sound until our Lord shows that it is he who is speaking; for he does not do this good to all. Behold, then, the power of God which is hidden from the reprobate; and thus, it is a privilege God grants to few — to those whom he has elected and adopted to attain eternal life — when he declares to them that the Gospel is the doctrine of salvation, a certain truth to which one must hold fast.

Behold, in sum, what the Prophet Isaiah meant to touch on in this passage. Now upon this we must be fortified and armed against the objection that the devil sets before our eyes, when we see so many people resist the Gospel — indeed the greatest, even those who have some reputation in the world; for then it seems to us almost that this is not the word of God. And why? We

depend far too much on men — behold how our faith is shaken. Let us therefore overcome all that is of the world, and recognise that when God speaks, we must submit ourselves to him — and even if no one keeps us company, but all were our enemies, let us not for that fail to accept in purity of faith what God pronounces. And moreover, so as not to be too astonished that men are so perverse as to war against their God, against him who created them, against him who has even declared himself their Redeemer — let us know that this is not given to all, and that faith is a singular gift that God reserves as a treasure for those he has elected, and let us recognise that our duty is to hold fast to him — knowing, nevertheless, that none of us has given himself faith by his own motion, but that God has enlightened us and given us eyes by his Holy Spirit, and in so doing has declared to us his power — that is, he has given us a living sense of it in our hearts, so that we know it is not from men that the Gospel proceeds, but from him. Behold, in sum, what we must retain from this passage. In short, let us boldly defy the unbelief and obstinacy of all those who are rebellious against God, and walk where he calls us, and accept the good he offers us, so that we are not guilty of that ingratitude which the Prophet here accuses and condemns in all those who will not obey the doctrine of the Gospel. Now hereupon he shows that men do not deign to believe in Jesus Christ, because they see him as disfigured. We know that our Lord Jesus is called a stone of stumbling and offense, because men come to strike themselves against him. Yet he was given by God his Father for another use — namely, that we should be founded on his grace, and that he should be as a stone to support us all, for there is no other support and firmness but him. We are, then, all wavering, and even hell is open to swallow us up. Thus behold our salvation, which has no foundation in this world, but we must be supported

in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is why, in the eighth chapter, when it is said he would be set as a precious stone, and the Temple of God would be built upon it, a foundation stone to support the whole edifice, the Prophet also added that to the kingdom of Judah and to the house of Israel he would be a stone of stumbling.

Following on this, it is now said that our Lord Jesus shall be as a small shoot, as a root growing in a dry and sterile ground, that he shall be despised — men will see him and not deign to look at him; each shall turn away his face, and shall hold him in detestation. This shows how few people will believe the Gospel, for we always seek to have some fine appearance before our eyes; we want everything to shine. Now God has proceeded in another way in willing to redeem us: for (as St. Paul says) since the world could not profit from the wisdom of God when he declared himself Creator — so that by looking at heaven and earth one could come to him — he changed his method, and used as it were a kind of foolishness to teach us. For (as I have said) we ought indeed to have been taught by that admirable wisdom of God which appears both high and low to the whole world, but we were made dull to it. God, then, used as it were a folly, when he sent his only Son, subjected him to all our infirmities, had him rejected by the world, born in a stable, and all his life he was like a poor labourer; and in the end we see all rise up against him, and there was such a rage that he was held in detestation, and was made everyone's enemy, and in the end they crucified him. Now that death was accursed of God, and he was not only disfigured by the blows, the spittings, and the crown of thorns, but he was made a curse when he was hanged between two thieves, as if he were the most detestable creature that had ever existed or been known. Now this kind of death was terrifying, because it was accursed in the Law. Behold

how he was disfigured; for this means became a scandal to men. And this is why the Prophet notably says that men will not believe the Gospel, because men cannot conceive that this is reasonable, and cannot in any way approve that the only Son of God, who is the Lord of glory, should be exposed to such reproach and ignominy; they cannot come to terms with this eternal counsel of God, which was from all eternity. We now see the Prophet's intent.

Now upon this he says that nevertheless he shall be exalted: even if from the beginning there is no appearance of it, God will make him grow, and one shall see with the eye, he says, that although he is in a desert land, although he is a small shoot, he shall nonetheless not fail to grow, and to flourish in all glory, for God will put his hand to it. And then he brings us back to our sins, to remove the scandal we conceive through the perversity of our own spirit. So that we may not refuse to come to our Lord Jesus Christ, seeing him thus disfigured, the Prophet shows us the reason why. For truly, if we have once recognised our sins, and have apprehended the wrath of God along with them, then we shall come to our Lord Jesus Christ, and the desire we shall have to be rescued by him will make us all the more inflamed to receive his death and passion; for we shall know that it is a necessary remedy for the evil that is in us. Behold, then, in sum, the procedure the Prophet follows here. Now when he compares our Lord Jesus Christ to a shoot, and to a root that is in a desert and sterile land, it is to show that the beginnings would be small, and that no account would be taken of it — indeed that the whole world would hold it in mockery and laughter. Already in the eleventh chapter he had compared our Lord Jesus Christ to a shoot, saying that he would come forth from the stock of Jesse, who is the father of David. Because then the royal house was cast down,

and had no more dignity, he said it would be as in olden times, when Jesse was a rustic man, having his sons as herdsmen and shepherds of the fields. That house was then obscure, without any reputation; and moreover it was like the trunk of a tree that had been cut down, on which one would tread, with no appearance of anything. Jesus Christ, then, was like a small shoot; but it is said afterwards that he would grow in such a way that he would give shade to the whole world.

Here too the Prophet shows that it was necessary that our Lord Jesus be thus despised from the beginning. For if this had not been notably declared, one might rightly have been scandalised at seeing the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ so contemptible in the world's eyes. For it had been said that there would always be someone seated on the throne of David, and that this Empire would flourish as long as there was sun and moon. Now behold that royal house as it were razed and annihilated; and who would think the promise fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, for there was no longer any appearance that it should be restored to its estate? But when it is said that this house shall be as it were altogether ruined, and that there shall be no more pre-eminence, nor sceptre, nor crown, and that men would almost be ashamed to see such ruin and confusion — when all this is declared by the Prophets, then we have good entry, namely, Jesus Christ. And we must not be astonished, as at some new and unknown thing, if Jesus Christ appears in so lowly a manner. And indeed, it is not in this place alone that the Holy Spirit has spoken thus. We see what is said by Amos, that God will raise up again that throne which had before been ruined, as this passage is also cited in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, to show that our Lord Jesus would begin to reign when it pleased God to repair what had been confused. And it had been notably said that this Kingdom would be as

trodden underfoot along with the royal crown, and that there would be no head to bear it, until the Redeemer should come into the world. All these things, then, ought to confirm us, so that we do not find it strange that the beginnings of our Lord Jesus Christ were so small.

Furthermore, by this word “dry ground” the Prophet means that our Lord Jesus will not seem to grow any more than a tree in a desert, where there is neither moisture nor anything else. Behold him, then, as a disfigured tree, for lack of being nourished and drawing substance and moisture from the earth. Now it is said that Jesus Christ will be thus from the beginning, to express that there will be no means here below to increase him, but that he will take his growth from on high, from the secret power of God his Father, and that he will not be aided by the world’s side, for there is nothing but sterility there — and this was not only so at his birth, but must be applied to the whole course of the Gospel. It is true that already it was a sign that Jesus Christ was a small shoot, when he found no place to lodge among men, but was as it were shut out and banished from all company, and was raised in such poverty that one could not tell if he was a man. This already served to prepare the faithful to recognise that Jesus Christ would be rejected and contemptible in the world’s eyes; but the chief instance was when he appeared to preach the Gospel and to execute the charge committed to him by God his Father. Then they began to say: Is this not the son of a carpenter? And do we not know how he was brought up? And in what school did he learn to be so great a doctor? And even his own relatives, seeing him so hated, wanted to make people believe he was out of his mind, and that he must be bound and shut away, so that they themselves would not all be stoned; for they saw well that this hatred would fall on the whole house. Finally, behold Jesus Christ crucified. It seemed the Gospel was

buried with him, and that its memory must be utterly extinguished. Who would have said that the Apostles could thus advance the doctrine of salvation? Behold poor idiots, who never knew what letters were, who had not been trained in the holy Scripture, who had no eloquence nor skill whatever; and moreover they were lowly men, to whom no one would deign to lend an ear, even had they spoken like Angels. In this, what does one see but a desert? Where are the great pomps and preparations to make kings and princes submit to the Gospel? But on the contrary, behold drawn swords, fires lit to prevent this doctrine from having its course.

Thus, one sees clearly that it is as if, in a desert land, a small stick had been planted. And who would say that there ought to grow from it a tree to cover the whole world, so that everyone might find refuge there? Who could imagine this, seeing such beginnings? Thus, not without cause, the Prophet Isaiah declares that the world, which is too much given over to pomp and grandeur, will not deign to look upon Jesus Christ, but will hold him as despised, since he is a shoot, a small twig, having come forth from a sterile land, where there is neither water nor moisture nor any vigorous substance. Now this is notably shown to us so that we should not be turned away or discouraged by such a scandal, but that we should promptly come to our Lord Jesus Christ. When, then, it has been declared to us how the Gospel was to be preached in the world, and we still see the like today — namely, that the Church will be only like a small handful of people whom men will esteem as rabble, and that we ourselves shall be an abomination to those who today have all the vogue in the world — let us not for that lose courage. For we see how our Lord Jesus Christ appeared from the beginning; and if he still wishes his Kingdom to be preserved today in the same manner, this ought not to prevent us from ranging ourselves alongside

him. And recognizing that the foolishness of God (as St. Paul speaks of it) has surpassed all the wisdom of men, let us not be so presumptuous as to oppose this, but let us recognise that as God willed to annihilate his Son, so also he willed to exalt him above the heavens; and let us find good what he has ordained in his counsel, and acquiesce in it.

Furthermore, let us note well this phrase, that he shall grow up before him, whatever may be. If through our pride and our contempt we imagine we can trample Jesus Christ underfoot and hold him under the earth, this is an abuse; he will grow in spite of all the unbelief, malice, ingratitude, and rebellion of men — yes, but this shall be before God. Now it is true that he grows also before the faithful, for they adore him in all obedience and recognise that the sovereign name God has given him well deserves that all should bend the knee before him. But the Prophet has notably said that he shall grow before God, as if making a balance between men, who strive to overturn the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and to keep it as it were suppressed, and God his Father, who will lend him his hand, and will bring it about that nothing shall hinder him from attaining the fruit of his glory and majesty, to which he has been called. Here, then, is the natural sense of these words: that our Lord Jesus is like a shoot — indeed, if one looks to outward appearance — and is in a desert, because there are no worldly means to make him grow; but whatever the case, he shall grow. And how? Before God. Let us, then, no longer be astonished when men mock the doctrine of the Gospel, and it is held in reproach because of the pride that is in all unbelievers; but when we see the enemies of the truth so arrogant, lifting their horns against our Lord Jesus Christ, and even battling against him with all fury, let us turn our gaze away from that; let us not be so foolish as to despise the Son of God because the praise he deserves is not

rendered to him by the blind, and those who are wholly possessed and bewitched by Satan — let us rather look to God, and then we shall be well edified in our faith.

For since Jesus Christ thus increases in the presence of God his Father, it is right that on our part we should magnify him, and render to him what belongs to him — in short, that we should learn to rest wholly upon God, and then we shall be able freely to defy the world. And although the world takes no account of the Word of God, we shall not fail to render full obedience to it, as we owe it to him. And why? Because God will be more to us than an infinite multitude of gainsayers, who might turn us away from coming to our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is very necessary for us today, for (as we have touched on) we see the greatest of this world, and those reputed the wisest, nonetheless waging war against the Gospel; and those who boast of being the greatest supporters of the Gospel, those who are not content merely to be called Christians but wish to surpass all others, as it were, in superlative degree — such people, I say, are nonetheless as instruments of Satan to abolish the truth of God and to set themselves against our Lord Jesus Christ and his Word. If this astonishes us, let us note well what is said here — that if we see men so obstinate and hardened in not receiving the Son of God when he presents himself to them, we must defy them, even the greatest of this world; for they are but filth compared to God. It is true that, according to their present estate, they will have such majesty that it will seem everything must tremble beneath them; but if we can lift our thoughts to God, and cast our gaze there, it is certain that all these worldly fanfares will be nothing to us, no more than a straw. Behold, then, how our faith must rise, so that nothing we see here below may prevent Jesus Christ from having his authority over us.

Behold, then, what we must retain from this passage. And indeed, since God works in strange and incomprehensible ways, this ought to confirm us all the more. If the Gospel were preached by people of great renown, so that kings and princes submitted to it, so that estates everywhere held to it, and it were concluded, “Behold, this is where we must stand, here is a heavenly truth, and we must conform to it,” and each on his own side favoured it and applied to it all his strength and abilities — this would be like a rich soil well cultivated, where trees and vines were planted, wheat sown, everyone helping, sparing nothing. When, then, a land were thus cultivated, had rain in season, and were constantly tended, in short, where no pains were spared — well, this would be natural; one would not perceive that God had put his hand to it. But when today we see the contradictions and resistances raised to suppress the Gospel; when we see how many tongues are set against it (for today not only these hypocrites throughout the Papacy praise themselves like whores to blaspheme against God and his Word, but we shall even see such rabble among ourselves); and then again we see how cruelty is exercised against the poor children of God, and new plots are hatched daily to forge one edict upon another, in order to annihilate this doctrine altogether; we see the mockeries of all the profane, who today stick out their tongues and would abolish all religion — when, then, we see all these things, we must indeed conclude that God is triumphing, and that the doctrine is victorious and proceeds from him. This, then, ought to serve as our confirmation, when we see that there is nothing in this world to advance the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine of his Gospel, but rather everyone retards it; and yet it does not fail to find entry and to have its course. Meanwhile, we are convicted of ingratitude if we turn this into a scandal, seeing that God calls us to himself, and shows us that it is he who

is at work; whereby we must conclude that it is a miracle when the Gospel thus prospers. This, in sum, is how we ought today to practice this doctrine.

Now there is more still: that Jesus Christ was to be disfigured. The Prophet has already said he would be like a small shoot; but this is more — that he would be despised, rejected, that no one would deign to look at him, that there would be nothing in him to be desired. This is to show that our Lord Jesus in his person, as we have already shown, was to be vilified by the world and to suffer all ignominy, as if he had been rejected not only by men but by God as well. Now to seek our salvation — so desirable a thing — in one who has no attraction in himself, seems to be an absurdity. Yet we must overcome this temptation in order to come to Jesus Christ. And this was very necessary, first because of the Jews, who had always awaited an earthly Kingdom, for this was a nation full of avarice and pride, so that they thought God could not show himself merciful toward them except by heaping up all the riches of the world for them, and making them live in delights and pomps. Behold what sort of redeemer they hoped for. Yet God had well warned them that the Redeemer would be like a small shoot, that he would be rejected by the world. And this warning was necessary not only to them, but today to us as well; for this scandal remained even after the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as St. Luke speaks of it, that the Gentiles held Jesus Christ in mockery, and the Jews armed themselves with venom and malice against him, and dashed themselves as against a stone of stumbling. And still today we see such examples in our own time. All the more must we retain this doctrine — that it was necessary for the Son of God to be thus without form or beauty, that there should be nothing in him for which he should be prized — I mean in men's opinion — for we must always note what is said in the first chapter of St. John, that the glory of the

only Son of God appeared in him, but there were many blind who did not recognise it. Thus, when the Prophet Isaiah declares that Jesus Christ will be as it were altogether disfigured, that there will be nothing but deformity in him, he thereby signifies that men will not be able, by their natural sense, to know that he has been sent for their salvation, and that he has all power both of life and death, and that all fullness of righteousness, wisdom, and holiness are in him. Men, I say, will not be able to conceive this in their minds. Thus, we must take this passage: for although our Lord Jesus performed miracles that testified to his divine power, nevertheless he did not cease to be disfigured, and the unbelievers saw nothing of it. Thus, this passage of the Prophet has always been fulfilled — that Jesus Christ had no beauty to attract men, for it is not spoken here only of his face, but the Prophet, in his name, speaks of the whole condition of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is indeed said in Psalm 45 that he was to be exalted in beauty, above the whole human race; but that beauty is spiritual, according to what we have already said, that the glory of the Son of God appeared in him — indeed, to those who had eyes and could contemplate it. Behold, then, our Lord Jesus Christ who has surpassed all men in beauty, for God gave him infallible marks by which it was known that he was truly the living image of God his Father. There is, then, ample reason to magnify our Lord Jesus Christ, but this was hidden from the world. Thus, we must always come back to what the Prophet says, that everyone turned his back on him, that everyone shut his eyes to him, as to a detestable thing. What? To seek my life in death, to seek my hope in one who could not save himself, to seek my strength in one who was so weak — who could do this? In short, we know, and each of us experiences it too much, that as our Lord Jesus Christ was abased in his

death, so also our faith will stumble unless it is sustained from elsewhere. When, then, it is a matter of resting upon our Lord Jesus Christ, of having all our refuge in him fully, of having our trust as it were fastened there, we look and say: What? I see him so annihilated in his death that it seems to us all is over.

Now we must come to what the Prophet sets before us here: that, having been struck down in death, God has exalted him above all creatures. And this also ought to lift our faith even to heaven. Whatever the case, let us learn not to be scandalised, seeing that the Son of God was crucified, and that in his own person he suffered all reproach, and that still today he is disdained in his members, all manner of insult heaped on him — let this not turn us away, but let us always remain firm in the faith of his Gospel. Now since this combat is difficult, the Prophet brings us back to the reason why our Lord Jesus suffered, for truly we could never rest on the Son of God until we have known the fruit that comes to us from his death and passion. And why? At first sight (as I have said) it will be condemned as folly, that he who is the author of life should be a mortal man, that he should die — and not by a simple death, but an ignominious death accursed of God — that he should be hanged on the gibbet like a brigand. When, then, we see all this, it is certain we shall be seized with disdain, and shall never be able to come to Jesus Christ. But here is the true remedy: that we know why he died, how his death has profited us, and the good we receive from it — then all scandals will be abolished. For example: if I am troubled with vexation when I consider that the only Son of God was as it were trampled underfoot and made detestable before men, I must enter into myself; for if I look only at Jesus Christ, I shall turn away from him and take no account of him; but if I look first at myself, and then come afterward to him, then what he

suffered will be of good savour to me. How so? If I consider that I am a poor sinner, and that I have provoked the wrath of God against me, so that he must be my adversary and my judge — if, then, I think of my sins, and thereupon come to conceive how horrible and dreadful a thing is the wrath of God, and that he should be my Judge to overwhelm me — then I shall come to say: Now then, what means have you to make peace with God? Can you bring him anything that could satisfy, even for the least offence you have committed? Alas, no. Though I circled the whole earth and sea, would I find any recompense? Could the Angels of paradise help me in this? It is necessary, then, that Jesus Christ appear in my name, and constitute himself my surety and my guarantor.

Behold how the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ will no longer be turned into folly for us, but we shall conceive that since we were thus accursed, and there was no remedy to find grace before God, since we had thus provoked him, and he was contrary and hostile to us, it was necessary that we be subject at the same time to Satan and his tyranny, until Jesus Christ delivered us from it. Behold, I say, how we shall begin to magnify the infinite goodness of our God, and to hold our sins in detestation, and to be as utterly confounded as anything could be. Behold also how the scandal we imagine, and that each forges for himself concerning the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, will soon be effaced — namely, when we enter into ourselves, and make a good examination of our sins, and recognise that we are so detestable to God that he himself must come, in the person of his Son, to make satisfaction for it, and to repair our iniquities, so that by this means we may be reconciled to him.

Behold, then, the order the Prophet follows here. He says on the one hand that Jesus Christ will have neither form nor figure, and that nothing will be

found in him to be desired — indeed, that looking at him from afar, one will be astonished at him. But having said all these things, he adds: yet he was afflicted for our sins — as if he said: Poor blind people, you take no account of the Son of God, and each by his own ingratitude shuts the door on himself, so that you cannot approach him to obtain the salvation he brings you. What is the cause of this? It is that you have not known your sins, so as to humble yourselves — everyone is asleep, indeed stupid, and nourishes himself on his vain flatteries. But look at yourselves in your poverty and filth, and then you will be ashamed of your condition, and will recognise that there is no other means but for Jesus Christ to mediate there, and to take upon his own person what made you enemies of God, and to be there your surety, to constitute himself as it were a poor sinner, to take all your burdens and carry them himself. When, then, you think on all these things, you will take a good taste for ranging yourselves with the Son of God, and you will no longer stop at your vain fancies; you will no longer be scandalised that Jesus Christ so annihilated himself, when you recognise what condemnation you had deserved, and what recompense and satisfaction was required for it.

For the rest, the Prophet notably says, “We have seen him, and we despised him,” to show that our Lord Jesus will be despised and rejected not only by some number of people, but by the greatest multitude — indeed by that people who claimed him as their own. For the Prophet, placing himself among the number of those who rejected our Lord Jesus Christ, looks to his own people — that is, the Jews from whom he was born — and beyond that he also wishes to show that this was the common opinion, and that almost everywhere Jesus Christ was rejected. Thus we are all the more fortified, so as not to attach ourselves to the fancy of men, when we see not

merely a hundred unbelievers, but that they will come in great crowds and with great armies, that they will come by the millions, and that among a hundred one will scarcely find three or four who peaceably range themselves with our Lord Jesus Christ — when we see this, let us nonetheless not fail to hold fast to him. Behold, in sum, what we must retain from this passage. For today we would like to count the votes, and many weak people look and say: What? There is only a small handful of people who believe the Gospel; if I outnumbered them, I would still willingly join — but that I should go and place myself with so small a portion, leaving the greater multitude, what would that be?

Now to cut off such objections, the Prophet says there will not be merely four or ten, but that nearly everyone in general will refuse to obey our Lord Jesus Christ. And indeed, there is no doubt that he means particularly to indict the Jews here, for we have already cited from the eighth chapter that he was to be a scandal to both these houses — that is, to the line of Abraham. Behold, then, the people who were God's above all others, and who, it would seem, ought to have recognised their Redeemer. For to whom was Jesus Christ promised? To the Jews, as it is said that he is a minister of the circumcision, in order to fulfil the promises the fathers had received. The Jews, then, ought to have been altogether accustomed to Jesus Christ before he appeared in the world, and to receive him without any difficulty; yet it is said that they rejected him — even the builders themselves, that is, the leaders who had charge of the people. And this is found still today, for it is not only the Turks and the pagans who reject Jesus Christ, but those who usurp the name of Christianity and falsify it, and even those who make profession of the Gospel are often profane men, mockers of God, and villains, who would wish that all doctrine of salvation were abolished, and

if they retain it still, it is only for shame before men. Whatever the case, Jesus Christ will be despised and rejected; and if this had not been foretold, we might be shaken in our faith. But this statement of Isaiah ought to be for us like a staff to support us — indeed like a firm rock — when we see the whole world dashing itself against our Lord Jesus Christ: some defying him and rising up in all fury against him and his doctrine, others mocking and sticking out their tongues to hold all religion in contempt. Let us, then, persist nonetheless steadfastly in our faith.

It is true that it would be greatly to be desired that Jesus Christ be contemplated from afar, and that everyone submit themselves to him, as he is the true mirror and pattern of all holiness; but nevertheless, the more we see the world reject him, the more our faith ought to be confirmed. For how can we discern that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of the world? Let us look at what is said of him by all the Prophets. And indeed, behold the true mirror in which we must contemplate the glory of the only Son of God — behold the true witnesses God has sent from heaven to mark out for us what our Redeemer was to be, namely, that he would be rejected by the whole world, and that everyone would rise up against him. Since this is so, let us accept him on this condition; and let us not doubt that when it seems we must be altogether overwhelmed, and trampled underfoot by the audacity and pride of the wicked, God will nevertheless magnify our Lord Jesus Christ, and will strengthen our faith by his Holy Spirit, so that it shall be victorious to the end — and that as our Lord Jesus has conquered the devil, as in the end he and all his followers must be made his footstool, so too he will make us triumph with him, to trample underfoot all those who persecute us, and who today rise up in such fury against us, and who even despise and defy him.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgment of our faults, praying to him, etc.

THIRD SERMON

Isaiah, Chapter LIII

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken of God, and afflicted. 5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

When we contemplate the works of God throughout the whole world, we are told that he must be praised according to his loftiness and greatness; but when we come to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must learn to glorify God according to how he has abased himself. Behold, then, a twofold manner of praising God: the one, that because he shows us his goodness, justice, and infinite power in all he has created and made, and in how he orders and disposes all things, he must also be exalted by us — not

that we can give him any greatness, but Scripture speaks thus so that men may learn to lift their spirits on high, above the whole world, when they wish to glorify God according to his worth. The second manner is that, since our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, not only made himself small for our salvation but was willing to be utterly annihilated, and did not even refuse to suffer the anguish of death, as if entering into hell itself — in this God deserves to be glorified more than in that greatness which appears throughout the whole world. And this was already touched on yesterday; but since the Prophet continues his discourse, we must always keep this end in view: that whereas unbelievers, seeing that Jesus Christ was thus afflicted by the hand of God his Father, are astonished and take occasion for scandal to distance themselves from him, we ought all the more to be moved to seek him, and this ought to ravish us wholly into his love, since he did not spare himself, but was willing to bear all our burdens, that we might be relieved of them. When, then, we see that our Lord Jesus Christ made such an exchange for us, and was willing to make a full payment of all our debts, so that we might be acquitted of them — that he was willing to be condemned in our name, and as it were in our person, so that we might be absolved — this ought to draw us to him, indeed to inflame us wholly, so that we may have our rest in him.

Now it is notably said that he was afflicted by the hand of God, but that this was for our iniquities. For if we have no regard to the judgment of God, the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ will be as it were useless, and we shall be able to receive no fruit from it. For the chief thing is that we be made right with our God, who is our enemy until our faults are buried, since he cannot love iniquity, he who is the fountain of righteousness. Thus he must be our judge as long as he imputes our sins to us, and looks at what

we are; but when Jesus Christ stands between, and presents himself there in our name, behold how we become agreeable to God, since the satisfaction for all our iniquities is accomplished. It is not fitting that the condemnation our Lord Jesus Christ suffered should be in vain. Now it is so that he had committed no fault, and was guilty of nothing. Thus, he was condemned for our absolution, and this is why he is called the Lamb without blemish. He is called Lamb because he was offered in sacrifice; he was without blemish, to show that he bore all our burdens. And this is also why it is said that his blood is our washing, for we are soiled and full of abomination until the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us. It is not, then, without cause that the Prophet brings us back to the judgment of God, saying that Jesus Christ was afflicted because it was necessary that he bear our condemnation. In short, whenever we think of how the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ has profited us, let each of us summon himself before the judgment-seat of God: there we shall find that we are all criminals. Now what is the rigour of God's judgment? How terrible is his vengeance? It is to swallow us up and overwhelm us entirely. But since our Lord Jesus Christ was not spared, but God exercised the rigour of his judgment upon him, since he was there in our name as surety for us, we may be assured that God will no longer pursue us, and will not enter into account with us, and will not punish us according to our deserts and offences. And why? Because our Lord Jesus has acquitted us of them. Now it is true that God never had any other affection toward his only Son than that which he pronounced: "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I rest, and let him be heard." God, then, had already declared that Jesus Christ fully satisfied him, and that he took his good pleasure in him. And indeed (as St. Paul shows in the first chapter of Ephesians) we could not be agreeable to God in the name of his only

Son, unless in the first place and in sovereign degree he were the beloved one. Nevertheless, this did not prevent us from being acquitted, inasmuch as God displayed his rigour upon our Lord Jesus Christ — for he loved him, and yet was willing to afflict him for our faults. For he did not regard his righteousness, his integrity, and the perfection that was in him, but rather Jesus Christ was taken as being there in the person of all sinners. Behold, then, Jesus Christ who was charged with all our faults and iniquities — not that he was guilty of them, but he was willing that the whole be imputed to him, and that he should render account of it and make the payment.

This, then, is how we must take the Prophet's words, when he says that Jesus Christ was not only crucified by the hand of men, but that he then appeared before the judgment-seat of God, that there he answered in our name, that there he submitted to bear the burden we had deserved. And this is also why he notably adds that he bore our faults and transgressions — as St. Peter also speaks of it, using this word “cross” or “tree,” to show that this kind of death the Son of God suffered was a visible and manifest testimony that our iniquities were laid upon him; for it was said in the Law, “Cursed is he who hangs on a tree.” Jesus Christ was hanged there so that we might know he was as it were accursed in our person, as St. Paul speaks of it to the Galatians. For he sets before us that we must consider here an admirable goodness of God and an infinite love of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he bore us, in that not only was he willing to die for us, but also suffered an accursed death, so that we might be blessed of God. And although our iniquities terrify us (as indeed it cannot be otherwise but that we should be terrified by the judgment of God when we hear the things contained here — namely, that we are abominable when we thus offend our God, and that our conscience gnaws at us) — nevertheless let us not fail to

be assured that he will forgive us our sins and accept us as his beloved children, indeed as just and irreproachable, since our curse has been abolished on that tree on which our Lord Jesus Christ was hanged. This, then, is what the Prophet wished further to add for fuller expression.

Now he adds at the same time that he was afflicted, in that the correction, or chastisement, of our peace was upon him. He adds nothing new, but declares himself more intimately, to show how this must be understood — namely, that our Lord Jesus was beaten and struck by the hand of God, so that we might be discharged. He bore, then, the correction that was due to us — indeed a correction of peace. It is true that some understand that our Lord Jesus had to be thus punished in our name because we were stunned, and that no one thought of humbling himself before God, and that we were blinded in our faults. But we see that the natural sense of the Prophet is that in order to have peace with God, we needed to be reconciled by another means. I have already declared that God, being the Judge of the world, rightly hates us and holds us all detestable — for (as will yet be declared) what do we bring from our mother's womb, and what treasure do we amass throughout our life? We never cease to provoke the wrath of God, as if we had conspired with Satan always to kindle the fire more and more. Behold, then, how we deserve to be hated and rejected by God. This is why he is armed in his wrath against us, for it is impossible that he not be contrary to us, since we war against him, and thus make war on all good and violate all justice. It is necessary (I say) that God for this reason rise up against us in judgment, for we know that it is his own proper office to maintain equity and righteousness. And since he sees us full of iniquity and corruption, and altogether rebellious, he must indeed display his arm, and show that since we are his enemies, he will render us the like. There is, then, no peace, and

our consciences will always accuse us; and although we try to lull ourselves with our flatteries, God will not fail to give us pricks and goads, so that we shall feel, in spite of our teeth, that there is nothing but malice and ingratitude in us.

Thus, it is impossible for God to be merciful to us, and for us to be assured of finding grace before him, until the correction is made. Not that God seeks vengeance in the manner and fashion of men — one who is moved to anger will want the fault repaired, and some amends and punishment made, so that he is thereby avenged; God has no passions of that kind. But whatever the case, so that we may have all the more horror of our sins, and learn to detest them, he wills that his justice be known to us, and the rigour of his judgment. If God forgave us without Jesus Christ having interceded for us, and having constituted himself surety in our name, we would take no account of it; each would wipe his mouth clean, and we would even take occasion from this to give ourselves all the more license. But when we see that God did not spare his only Son, and treated him with such rigour, so extreme, that he suffered in his body all that it was possible to suffer of sorrows, and that in his very soul he was afflicted to the utmost, even to crying out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — when we hear all these things, it is impossible (unless we are harder than stones) that we should not tremble and conceive such fear and astonishment in ourselves as to be utterly confounded, and that our offenses and iniquities should not become detestable to us, seeing that they thus provoke the wrath of God against us.

This, then, is why it was required that the whole correction of our peace be upon Jesus Christ, which was to make us find grace before God his Father — that is, to make us find reconciliation before him, in such a way

that today we have boldness and liberty to invoke God as our Father, although he might rightfully be our enemy and hold us in detestation according to our nature. We now see, then, what is the Prophet's intent when he says that our Lord Jesus Christ was afflicted by the hand of God, that he was disfigured, that everyone turned away from him, that no one deigned to look at him because he was so deformed. He adds: Yes, but this is because God is inflamed in his wrath against us, and is armed to confound and overwhelm us, until the reconciliation is made. And what is the means of it? God is willing to forgive us our faults out of his free goodness, but the price of our redemption was in the person of his only Son. Now here we must note that, since our Lord Jesus suffered condemnation, we are delivered and absolved, and our faults are buried so as not to come into account before God. When we speak of the remission of sins, it is not that God quits us as if he were paid and satisfied by us — rather he uses his pure liberality. And although we are guilty before him, he forgets all that, and receives us in mercy, in that he casts our sins as into the depths of the sea, as the Prophet says. Yet we must also note that this remission was not free as far as concerns the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, for it cost him very dearly. If we consider that it came from that death so hard, so cruel, and so ignominious that he suffered, and then from so many anguishes he endured in his soul, when he was called before the judgment-seat of God his Father to bear our condemnation — if we think well on all this, we shall find that our Lord Jesus Christ made an admirable payment to acquit us of our faults.

And behold how today we are delivered from them. And this is a thing we must note well, for the devil has always striven to obscure this doctrine, since it is the chief article of our salvation. God, from the beginning of the

world, willed that sacrifices be offered to him in asking pardon for sins. And why so? It is to declare that men could not hope for it from him except by means of sacrifice and the shedding of blood. All, then, protested in their sacrifices that they could not approach God except insofar as they were redeemed, and that the purging of their faults and iniquities was made, or was to be made, by our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet meanwhile both Jews and pagans have not failed always to trust in their own merits, and to imagine they could satisfy before God. Behold how the devil from that time has turned poor sinners away from our Lord Jesus Christ, and from the payment he made in his death and passion. And even now, behold where the Papists stand: for they will confess that we have full remission of our sins by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ — yes, but this is before baptism only, according to their opinion. Little children (they say) have received this grace of God, that original sin is forgiven them in baptism, by virtue of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; but when we are baptized, they say that if we sin thereafter, Jesus Christ alone is not sufficient to make us agreeable to God, and to have the memory of our sins effaced — but that we must also bring our own recompenses. And this is why they have imagined their works of supererogation, such as going on pilgrimage, having many masses sung, and other such devilries. And if one asks the Papists why they go trotting off to see the countenance of some little idol, why they fast on such a day, why they build a temple, why they have a mass sung — it is to redeem ourselves before God, they will say. And we must indeed, having recognised our sins, strive to make satisfaction for them, so as to be acquitted and absolved before God. Behold, then, how the power of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is abolished. And thus, the Papists cannot take a single step in their devotions without blaspheming

against God, openly renouncing the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hurling themselves into the pit of hell. Behold where their devilish devotions (which they call good) lead them. Thus, we must note well these words of the Prophet, when he says that the correction of our peace was upon our Lord Jesus Christ — that is, that by his means God is reconciled and appeased, for he bore upon himself all the vices and all the iniquities of the world. And thus, let us note that when we consider what we are, we must always be in dread, since God is our adverse party and our Judge. And then in the second place we must conclude that there is no means either in heaven or on earth to reconcile us with God, except by this price which our Lord Jesus paid, and by which he made satisfaction — namely, by his death and passion.

Do we have this? Then let us boldly come with head raised before God — not that we ought not always to humble ourselves, and be ashamed of our poverty — but this will not prevent us from freely invoking God as our Father, and being able to glory that we shall be counted righteous by him, and that payment has been made of all our debts, since we are absolved by virtue of the condemnation that Jesus Christ suffered.

Behold, then, how we must practice this passage. And this is also why he adds that by his stripes we are healed. It is true that we do not perceive our vices with our own eyes, because hypocrisy blinds them, and there is always also pride which dominates. Men, then, deceive themselves and make themselves believe that God is still in their debt; or else they are so stunned that they think they will never come to account. Yet it is so that the Prophet shows that without the wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is in us nothing but death, and that we must indeed seek our healing in him. When, then, we wish truly to feel the fruit that the death and passion of our

Lord Jesus Christ brings us, let us note that as many vices as are rooted in our nature, so many are wounds and mortal diseases, even though they do not appear. I ask you, when there is an abscess inside a man's body, near the stomach, or within the bowels, is it not far worse than if it were seen and one could apply the lancet to it? If a man imagines himself healthy because he does not see his illness, he must be out of his senses and reason. Our diseases must be all the more mortal when they are hidden. And besides the vices we carry (whose roots are hidden in us), there are the faults we commit each day, which show well enough that our nature is perverse and accursed, and that we are all corrupted. Since this is so, that there is in us nothing but total infection and spiritual leprosy, and that we are rotten in our iniquities — what shall we do here? What remedy? Shall we go seek the Angels of Paradise? Alas, they can do nothing for us. But we must come to our Lord Jesus Christ, since he was willing to be disfigured from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, to be covered all over with wounds, to be scourged blow upon blow, to have the crown of thorns, to be nailed and fastened to the cross, to have his side pierced. Behold how we are made whole, behold what our true medicine is, with which we must be content, and to which also we must apply all our affection, knowing that otherwise we can never have rest in ourselves, but must be tormented and tortured to the end, unless Jesus Christ console us and appease the wrath of God toward us. When we are assured of this, then he gives us occasion to sing his praise — whereas before we could do nothing but groan and be utterly confounded. Behold in sum what we must retain of the Prophet's words.

Now St. Matthew, in the eighth chapter, alleges this passage when he recounts that our Lord Jesus healed every disease, as he gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, restored hearing to the deaf, raised up those who

were half-dead and paralysed, and cast devils out of bodies. This (he says) shows that the Prophet Isaiah not without cause says that he bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows. It is certain that the Prophet does not speak here of the diseases of the body. It might seem, then, that the Evangelist has misapplied this testimony. But it is that he declares that our Lord Jesus, in healing visible diseases, wished to lead us higher, in that he wished us to contemplate there, as in a figure, why he had come into the world. When, then, we hear that our Lord Jesus Christ gave strength to the paralyzed, that he even raised the dead, that he also gave healing to every disease, let us know that visibly, according to our dullness and infirmity, he has declared to us that he is our spiritual Physician; and let us learn (as I have already said) that all the vices to which we are inclined are so many corruptions in our souls. And just as in the body there are bad humours and other such things, there are diseases that are hidden — so likewise with our souls; and since they are full of vices before God, they too have need of a physician. And who shall he be? We shall find him neither in heaven nor on earth, save him who has been given us by the heavenly Father — namely, our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, if we do not know how our Lord Jesus has brought us healing as to our souls, let us come to this figure that is shown us, when he gave light to the blind, for it is certain that in our souls there is nothing but blindness and stupidity. Then, Jesus Christ made the mute speak. Now to what do we apply our tongue, if not to evil, until Jesus Christ has restored to it its true use? We are more than deaf, since the word of God has no entry in us; our hearing, then, must also be restored to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. In short, when we join what is set forth in St. Matthew with what the Prophet Isaiah wished to declare — namely, that on our part we are full of corruption, of vileness, and that there is not one drop of health

in us, that our souls are utterly full of mortal vices; but that our Lord Jesus has delivered us wholly from them, and that when we come to him we shall find healing — when, I say, we join the one thing to the other, then we shall know that unless we have our refuge in this Redeemer, we must always grow in our vices and miseries, and rot entirely in them.

Furthermore, he adds also that we have all gone astray, and that each has strayed in his own way. Here the Prophet has wished to touch us more closely and more to the quick (as was treated yesterday), for we cannot truly feel the necessity we have of being healed by our Lord Jesus Christ, until each has well examined his own state and known what he is in himself. What is the cause, then, that we are so cold and so lax when we are told to come to our Lord Jesus Christ? Because we have no apprehension of it, but are as it were stupid. We shall see drunkards, so steeped in their intemperance, who make no end of it until they gnash their teeth and can bear no more. If one speaks to them of physicians, there will be nothing but mockery; they will shake their heads, and even scorn all remedies. Now there is no drunkenness worse than this stupidity in which all poor sinners are, until they have felt what it is to have God against them. Thus, each gives himself entire license to evil, and meanwhile the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is held in contempt, and no account is taken of it. Thus, not without cause, the Prophet, to awaken us and to make the good brought to us by Jesus Christ more desirable, shows that we have all gone astray. Now besides what I have said, that profane men despise the judgment of God, there are also those who are puffed up with a foolish presumption. There are, then, two kinds of people who cannot make their profit of this infinite grace acquired for us by the Son of God: for some think themselves righteous, and to have works and merits with which to

answer before God. As we see even in the Papacy, these hypocrites not only think they acquit themselves well before God, but also sell a portion of their merits, as if they had a surplus of them; and one is thought fortunate to share in their perfection and holiness, because they are, so to speak, in an Angelic state.

Now these take no thought of needing the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; they will confess it half-heartedly, as if to say, “Yes, but...” — yet one sees quite the opposite, for they hold a fair and market of their merits, and have some to sell, so that others may find themselves and place their trust in this profanation. Then, as many bigots and devout hypocrites as there are in the Papacy, so many are horns raised up against God, for they are always puffed up with this pride, saying: What? If I did not merit anything, of what use would it be to me to have had so many good devotions, to have had so many masses sung, to have mumbled so much, to have run from altar to altar, to have had my devotion to such a Saint, to have kept such a feast? In short, they always have this accursed and infernal opinion of wishing to put God in their debt. Behold how Satan deceives them by such illusions, so that they cannot taste of what use to them is the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Others do not trust in their merits — like drunkards, debauchees, and dissolute people — they will not say, “We are like little Angels, we have lived well, we have been fervent in our devotions”; but they mock at it (as I have already said) and think they can escape the hand of God by their scorn and mockeries.

For this cause the Prophet calls us all here, and says: Look, poor people, at what you are, until God has declared to you his pity in our Lord Jesus Christ his Son; for we have all gone astray, you are all lost beasts. Behold his intent; and he says “we all,” because he includes himself in the number.

Indeed, for we have already seen that the Jews had to be enclosed in this general condemnation of men, because it seemed to them they ought to be exempted from it. For they always had this foolish presumption, that since God had adopted and chosen them, they thought themselves worth more than the rest. Now the Prophet encloses them here in eternal death, until they have sought the remedy of their deliverance in Jesus Christ. We are, then, all enclosed in this condemnation; and he also uses this word “all” to exclude every exception — as if he said: Let no one boast, not even to the least degree, of being righteous before God, so as to be able to do without the remedy I have now declared. For the most perfect, and he who has the most holiness in the opinion of men, will be found guilty before God.

We see, then, now the Prophet’s intent; but even so he is not content with this — he says, “each has strayed in his own way.” And why does he repeat the statement, moving from “all” to “each”? Because when we are condemned in general, we are still not so moved, nor with such liveliness as would be required. It is true that one must submit to condemnation when it is said that among men there is not a single righteous one — as in another passage of the Psalm it is said that God has looked, and has not found a single man who was not rotten in his vices. There it is spoken as much of the virtuous, and of those who have had great and singular reputation, as of the most debauched. It is said that they have all gone astray, and that even to the last one, there is not one who was not entirely corrupted before God; and holy Scripture is full of this doctrine, and St. Paul shows it well enough in the third chapter of Romans, when he brings together all the passages, both from the Psalms and from the Prophets, where it is said that men are depraved, and that there is in them nothing but malice and treachery, that they are full of cruelty, that there is nothing but venom and every violence,

that fraud and rapine are theirs, and that their throat is an open grave. When, then, all these things are said, St. Paul adds that all men are comprehended in this without any exception, until God has changed and renewed them by his Holy Spirit.

Now when this doctrine is preached, we must all bow our heads, for we shall have shame and horror to reply against God. And indeed, what shall we gain in all our disputes? For we must, in spite of our teeth, feel that it is not in vain that we are condemned, since God is our judge. Yet meanwhile each will return home unmoved by it, and what has been said will scarcely touch us; we will say readily enough that we are all sinners, and that there is none who is not guilty before God — but do we truly feel our vices so as to be displeased with ourselves, and then be moved to seek the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, renouncing ourselves? No indeed — it is enough for us to have said, as a matter of form, that we are all sinners. What is worse, we shall often see that men take cover and boldness when they are accused of their faults, and are found convicted: Oh, it is true, they will say, all are sinners. A wicked man who has blasphemed the name of God, or committed some execrable and enormous act, if he is admonished, will deny it at first; but he will not enter into confession except under compulsion. And well, does he see himself convicted? And it is true, he will say, that we are all sinners: which is to say, that you are a wicked hypocrite, mocking God.

Thus, we see that under this generality there are many who will seek some excuse, so that their turpitude may not be known as it should be. For this cause, the Prophet, after having said “All have gone astray,” adds “each, each” — as if he said: Do not look in general at what the human race is, but let each withdraw apart to himself, and there think and search out well what you are. For it is then that we are touched by the judgment of God, and are

led to true humility, when we feel our own evil so as to be brought to repentance — when each has thus spoken to himself as in secret. We see, then, now the Prophet's intent.

Furthermore, in saying that each has gone astray in his own way, he shows firstly what it is of men when they govern themselves by their own appetite, and according to their own reason and prudence. And this is another article we must note well, in that we shall see some so foolish that one will never persuade them they are casting themselves into perdition, when they do as they please; others are so brutalised in their desires that they do not recognise that they knowingly plunge themselves into the depths of hell, unless God draws them out of it. We see today the Papists, when they are refuted by the word of God and see themselves convicted: Well, they say, let me be, I will always go my own way, whatever happens. And so you go to the devil, for that is where your course will take you. Oh yes, but my devotion is such — and since it is good, is it possible God would reject it? Yes indeed, but the Prophet Isaiah speaks here as much of the devotion each takes up; and the Holy Spirit who spoke through his mouth at that time — did he not well know that you would be a bigot, or a devout hypocrite, full of pride and venom, that you would wish to govern yourself by your own fancy, that you would wish to forge for yourself a service of God to your own liking, that you would worship idols and think you were doing well, that you would have your devotion there? Did the Holy Spirit not know all these vilenesses well? Look at what he pronounces of it: “Each has walked in his own way” — that is, each has gone off to hell, each has thrown himself into perdition when he followed his own course.

Behold, then, what are the ways of men. And thus, we are taught by this passage to strip ourselves of all foolish arrogance, and to recognise that in doing all that seems good to us, and what we judge to be quite reasonable, it is as if we had conspired with Satan to throw ourselves into his snares. This doctrine, then, ought to correct all presumption in us, so that we suffer ourselves to be governed only by the Spirit of God and by his Word; and likewise let us note that by these words the Prophet Isaiah has declared that even though we know the good, we shall not fail to be given over to evil. And why? Because all our affections are rebellious against God; even though we see that the evil must be removed, we shall not fail to be carried away to it — not by force, but by a wilful malice that is so hidden in us that the fruits must show what the root is. Thus, let us recognise, firstly, that there is no understanding in us to walk aright, but that there is only one way that God approves, and which will lead us to salvation — namely, when our Lord Jesus Christ takes us into his charge, and we become sheep of his flock, and follow him as our shepherd. Let us also further recognise that all our affections are corrupted, and that we shall seek evil instead of good, until our Lord Jesus Christ has corrected and reformed us, and has put in us a right disposition to obey him. This, then, is what the Prophet wished to declare.

Now we must conclude that all those who wander here and there turn themselves away from our Lord Jesus Christ; for the Prophet declares that there is not one Patriarch, not one Prophet, not one of all the holy Fathers and Martyrs who did not need to be reconciled to God by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. If Abraham, father of the faithful, if David, mirror of all righteousness, if others like them — such as Job and Daniel, who are named as mirrors of all holiness and perfection — if these,

I say, were poor stray and lost sheep until gathered by our Lord Jesus Christ, alas, what shall become of us? Thus, when we go to seek them out as our mediators, and imagine we can escape by their means the perdition in which we are, do we not show that we are far too ungrateful to our Lord Jesus Christ? And that meanwhile we are far too devoid of sense, in going to beg from those who themselves have need to have recourse to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ? For if necessity constrains us to seek a remedy, we must go to him to whom the faithful of every age have had their refuge; for there is neither St. Peter, nor St. Paul, nor the Virgin Mary, nor anything whatsoever, that is exempt from this. Let us learn, then, to come to the source and the fountain, and to draw there what we lack. For our Lord Jesus has enough to satisfy us all, and we need never fear that the fullness of grace he has in himself will run dry; he will give to each his share and portion when one comes to seek it there.

Let us, then, come boldly to our Lord Jesus Christ, and he will suffice for all; but whoever wanders here and there elsewhere cannot avail himself of the remedy God offers him, but rejects it as far as it depends on him; his ingratitude hinders him from enjoying the grace offered him. And we shall be all the more inexcusable, since this is preached to us daily. For God has not been content to have sent his Son once, and to have exposed him to death, to have struck him in his wrath — although he loved him as his only Son (for although he wished to overwhelm him in appearance, and used all rigour against him, nevertheless he was always the beloved Son, as we have said; but all this was so that we might be absolved) — he has not, I say, been content with this, but daily sets this treasure before us, that we might enjoy it. He declares to us that Jesus Christ, whose side was pierced, has today his heart as it were opened, so that we may have certainty of the love

he bears us; and that as he had his arms fastened on the cross, now he has them stretched out to draw us to himself; and that he wills that all these things should profit us — that as he shed his blood, he wills that today we be plunged into it. When, then, God invites us so sweetly, and Jesus Christ also sets before us the fruit of his death and passion, showing us that his blood is always fresh (as the Apostle speaks of it in the Epistle to the Hebrews) — that it is not a blood that dries up or fails, but that, having been sanctified by his heavenly power, it always remains fresh (as the Apostle also used this word) — let us know that his power is not diminished, and that it has always its full and entire efficacy, such as it had from the beginning, so that we may all come to range ourselves with our Lord Jesus Christ. And after having confessed our poverty and been confounded by it, let us not doubt that he is sufficient to give such a remedy that we may conclude we are received and acknowledged by God as his own children, and that he holds us as righteous and perfect, whereas we were abominable before him. This is what we must retain from this doctrine. Today, seeing that some mock and jeer, others rise up in pride and presumption and think to satisfy God by their own righteousness, let us renounce such blasphemies, and in true faith and repentance let us seek our Lord Jesus Christ, and let all our affection be to come and range ourselves with him, when we feel ourselves thus laden with this unbearable burden.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgment of our faults, praying to him, etc.

FOURTH SERMON

Isaiah, Chapter LIII

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. 8. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

The Prophet, having declared to us that we must each look to himself and to his own faults, in order to take a right taste for the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, now adds that what he suffered, he suffered not by force but of his own free will — as indeed, without this, we would not be justified, and the reconciliation would not be made between God and us: namely, if Jesus Christ had not repaired our transgressions by his obedience. For if the death of the Son of God had been forced, and he had not

submitted to it voluntarily, it would not have been a sacrifice to efface our faults — as St. Paul also brings us back to this, saying that our rebellions were abolished by the obedience of one man. What was the cause that made God our enemy, and still makes him so, except that we never cease to offend him? He created us to enjoy us peacefully; but when we refuse to bear his yoke, he must detest us and disown us as his creatures, and rightly so.

Now, then, this is why it is said not only that our Lord Jesus was chastised for our faults and iniquities, but that he did not open his mouth, and there was no contradiction in him; but, knowing that he was ordained to this, and that such was the eternal counsel of God his Father, he showed himself obedient even unto death. Thus, when we wish to feel still better the power of the death and passion of the Son of God, let each of us think in how many ways he has contravened the will of God and his justice. We shall find that we never cease to make war on him, as if we knowingly wished to defy him. We ought not, then, to wonder that we had need of such a remedy — namely, that the Son of God, to bury the memory of all our rebellions, should render himself obedient in our place. It is true that our Lord Jesus spoke before Pilate his judge; but this was not to escape death — rather he offered himself to it, and even refused to accept any occasion of being absolved, because it was necessary that he be condemned in our name.

It is not, then, without cause that the Prophet says he was as one dumb, and compares him to a sheep or to a lamb, looking to the figure of the ancient sacrifices; for when we are told of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must take it as a sacrifice by which God was appeased, since sins (as we have shown above) cannot be abolished before God except by such means. And indeed, when under the Law men wished to ask pardon

for their faults, the sacrifice always had to be added. They could bring no recompense of their own; but God declared to them that it was enough that they founded themselves on the promise given them of the Redeemer. Thus, so that the Jews should know that Jesus Christ was to fulfil all that was then figured in the Law, this name of Lamb is notably attributed to him, and under one figure the Prophet has comprehended the whole — as if he said that Jesus Christ, in his death and passion, would first abolish all our iniquities, in that he submitted himself to the will of God his Father; and then, secondly, that he would be sacrificed as a lamb, so that by the shedding of his blood all our blemishes might be washed and cleansed. Now, when we are reprov'd for the many faults we commit, and must feel the wrath of God, let us have recourse to what is set before us here — namely, that our Lord Jesus Christ, not without cause, was unwilling to reply, however extreme the afflictions he endured, and although God displayed upon him all rigour, nevertheless he peaceably suffered it all, so that by that obedience we might be reconciled.

Meanwhile, we are also exhorted to conform ourselves to his example — not that we can in all perfection humble ourselves before God, but we must strive toward it. I say, when it pleases God to chastise us, and we feel great harshness in his hand, and it seems to us that we are too hard pressed, we must nevertheless keep silence, and confess that God is just and equitable, and let no murmur be heard from our mouth; but rather let us glorify God in keeping silent — indeed as poor sinners who are convicted of their crimes and have no reply. Behold, then, how St. Peter applies this passage — namely, that when we are afflicted by the hand of God, indeed even persecuted by the hand of men, we should not fail to bear patiently the injuries done to us, knowing that God wishes to test us, or else wishes to

punish us for our faults. And let us take care not to allege frivolous excuses, as many do, who put forward their weakness, and that they are too feeble and cannot keep quiet while God presses them with great anguish. We must nevertheless be conformed to the Son of God, for he is our mirror and pattern — not (as I have said) that there can be equal virtue in us, but even though we do not approach him, we must still tend toward it. And further we see that David, being a fragile man as we are, did not fail nevertheless to practice this doctrine — as he says on the one hand: “Lord, knowing that it is thy hand that is thus laid heavy upon me, I have kept silence.” And in another passage: “Well, since the reins were loosed to my enemies, I have suffered patiently the injuries and outrages they did me.”

Behold, then, what we must retain from this passage: namely, that as the Son of God was dumb, to give glory to God, and did not contradict or reply in all his afflictions, so too we shall suffer God to chastise us when it pleases him, or to test our obedience by loosing the reins to the wicked so that they persecute us. Now it is impossible to attain to this until we have this doctrine well settled — that when our Lord Jesus was silent before God his Father and before men, he thereby repaired all our faults and rebellions. Furthermore, when we are told that by his silence he acquired righteousness for us, we see that such silence brings with it also this benefit: that it served to maintain our cause, and that he is now our advocate before God, ever having his mouth open — that is, having his intercession ready to remedy all the offenses we have committed. For inasmuch as he suffered himself to be persecuted to the end without answering, he acquired for himself this office: that if we are convicted in our consciences before God, and must submit to condemnation, and have no answer with which to excuse ourselves, we shall nevertheless be defended by him, and God will judge us

as innocent, since our faults have thus been repaired. Behold, then, at which end we must begin, and then we shall have better courage, and shall be much better disposed to keep silence when we are thus afflicted by the hand of God.

Now the Prophet further adds that he was taken up out of anguish, or out of prison (for this word carries that meaning), and out of judgment. Some expound this as though Jesus Christ had been snatched from death by a sudden violence; but rather we are told that he was not vanquished in death, but that by the power of God his Father he was raised up. It is already a great thing that we know our Lord Jesus suffered for our salvation, and that, having examined our lives, we feel that without such a remedy we were damned and lost; but if only his death and passion were spoken of, we would still be in doubt and scruple. For how could we hope he would give us life, if he were himself overwhelmed in death? We would perceive no divine or heavenly power, without which we cannot conceive a firm trust in him; we would see there only weakness that would astonish us.

Just as, then, the Prophet has spoken above of the fruit that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ brings us, he now adds that this is because he shall be raised up by the power of God his Father. He was, then, taken up (he says) from anguish and from judgment. And although he was condemned, this was not because God abandoned him in his need, but he was exalted to have sovereign Empire, and to have dominion over all creatures. And this is also what St. Paul shows us in the first chapter of Romans, saying that he was declared the Son of God in his resurrection. For if we look at Jesus Christ only in his life, as he conversed here below among men, and then in his death, we shall not find in him what is required for our salvation. It is true that the miracles he did, the doctrine he

preached, and the other signs he showed, were indeed sufficient to declare him the Son of God — were it not that we are too weak in faith. But we would still remain always confounded in perplexity, when Jesus Christ presented himself as an ordinary man, and even despised; and then when we would see him in the end subjected to that accursed and so ignominious death. But when we pass from death to the resurrection, then we know that our Lord Jesus has acquired victory for us. And this is what St. Paul says in the other passage of the second to the Corinthians, that if he died in the weakness of his flesh, in the power of God his Father he is risen. Thus, the order the Prophet follows here tends to this end: that we should not doubt that our Lord Jesus has life in his hand, and that he is lord and master of it, since this has been declared in his person. Let us know, then, that the Son of God was annihilated for us; and let us know at the same time that he was not thereby stripped of his power — and that if he kept it hidden for a little while, we have of it a sure testimony in his resurrection, so that there is no excuse for us not to rest our trust fully in him, and boldly to defy the devil and sin, since Jesus Christ has triumphed over them, and the hand of God has sustained him to free him from anguish, and from there he was exalted to be lieutenant of God his Father, and (as I have already said) to have sovereign empire in the world. This, then, is in sum what we must retain when it is said that he was taken up from prison and from judgment.

Now it was indeed necessary that our Lord Jesus should descend even to the abysses before being exalted to the glory of the heavens; for if he had appeared only in his majesty, how could we today be assured that our sins are forgiven us? We would see the Son of God, who is the fountain of life, but he would be as it were separated from us, and we would have nothing in common with him, we could not approach him. Moreover, we would

always have occasion to despair, since we are guilty of infinite faults. If, then, our Lord Jesus had descended to the abysses without being lifted up to the heavens, what would that be? We would remain always as poor, terror-struck people, and would be in endless and ceaseless disquiet; we would be in a horrible torment, seeing that the wrath of God would always be upon us. But when it is said first that he was condemned and suffered terrible anguish, so that we might be freed from it, and that, having peace with God (as was treated yesterday), we might now know that he loves us, is favourable to us, and receives us in mercy — when, then, we know that Jesus Christ was taken up from that, we may also well conclude that this was to draw us to himself, so that we might be partakers of the glory given him by God his Father.

Furthermore, we must also note what the Prophet adds: “who shall declare his generation?” For by this he wishes to show that the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has its effect and its power in perpetuity, and that it is not a temporal thing that flows away and soon vanishes. And this too is very necessary, for some have taken this “generation” to mean the eternal generation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that he was begotten of God his Father from all eternity. Others have pulled these words of the Prophet this way and that; but on close examination there is no doubt that he wished to show that the loftiness given to Jesus Christ was not for himself and his own person alone — and further, that it was not for one day only, but that he has acquired for us a permanent life, as St. Paul says, that he died once to sin, but now lives to God and shall never die again. By this he declares to us that the sacrifice our Lord Jesus offered ought to fully content us, since he has thereby sanctified us with all perfection. There was, then, no need for the Son of God to suffer several times; but since he had this power in

himself to efface once for all our iniquities, let us have our boldly refuge in his death and passion, and let us not doubt that it always retains this vigour to reconcile us to God.

Now the life into which our Lord Jesus has entered is truly heavenly, for he has a perfect condition, in which there is nothing to be said against it; and when St. Paul says that he lives to God, it is in that he is now exempt from all our miseries, and from the condition he had before taken on of being a mortal man. Jesus Christ, then, has stripped off all that, and is now separated from all human frailties — indeed, so that we might hope for the same in ourselves, who are his members. Let us note, then, first, that the Prophet has here declared that our Lord Jesus is not risen in order ever again to be subject to death, but that he has acquired a permanent life. And secondly, that this was not for his person alone, but for his whole Church — as when it is said in the Psalm that God has ascended on high and taken the spoils of his enemies, to show that when our Lord Jesus was exalted after his death, the whole benefit returned to the profit and common salvation of the Church. That he has conquered Satan and sin, then, was so that we might be delivered from them, and might enjoy the fruit of such a victory, and make it our triumph.

Behold, then, in sum, what we must retain from this passage. Now the whole matter is that we know how to apply it well to our own use. When, then, it is said that the Son of God was taken up from anguish and from condemnation, let us learn, when we are tempted to some despair, to set Jesus Christ before our eyes, knowing that he passed through this, and that God his Father held out his hand to him so that he should not be overwhelmed, and that this was in our name. Thus, we have the means to come out of our anguishes, having Jesus Christ as our captain, and

following his steps, since all that was accomplished in him, as in our head, belongs to us, and its effect will show itself in each believer. And when it is spoken of his “generation,” this is so that we may know that he will have the power to maintain his Church to the end, for he does not wish to be separated from his body. It is true that his condition is quite different from ours, until we are drawn away from this world; but yet he is always the firstborn from the dead, he is the firstfruits of those who must rise. Let us recognise, then, that the Son of God, not only in his essence and divine majesty is immortal, but also in his flesh and in his human nature, and that this is so that the Church may always be preserved in this world, and never perish. We must, then, be assured of the permanent estate of the Church when we are founded on this passage.

It is true that we shall see great troubles, and it will often seem that the Church of God must perish; for it takes but one storm to arise, and the waves will be so great and so terrible that men will say, “It is finished, all is lost.” And we see this by experience. What appearance is there that the Church of God is maintained, when it is thus assailed on every side? When there are so many assaults, does it not seem that it must be utterly overwhelmed? But nevertheless, we must come back to the Head. And since the age of our Lord Jesus Christ has no end, and there is no change that could hinder him from always having regard to the well-keeping of his Church, even though there be temptations far greater and more violent than they are, let us be nonetheless assured. And this must not be applied only to the whole community of the faithful, but also to each of us. Let us know, then, and be well persuaded, that although our life is but a breath, and we are ready at every minute to be extinguished, we nevertheless have a permanent life, in that we are members of our Lord Jesus Christ. And

furthermore, let us learn at the same time how to pass through this world, since it is so that this present life we now enjoy is not our true life, but a passage through which we must run swiftly, until we have arrived at the rest of our inheritance. Behold, then, how, in hoping for eternal life, we must quit all this, which is nothing but a shadow; and our senses must not be entangled in all that appears to us, and that could make us remain in this world — for all who cling to it, it is certain that they thereby separate themselves from the Son of God, and make themselves unworthy of having any part or portion in his eternity. Let us, then, withdraw ourselves from this world, if we wish to be joined to the Son of God.

Furthermore, so that this doctrine should have still more vigour and force upon us, the Prophet cries out — he does not merely pronounce that the age of our Lord Jesus Christ will be eternal, but he throws himself, as it were, like a man utterly astonished: “Who shall declare his age?” Thus, we are admonished to fight against every temptation, and if we are sometimes hindered here and there, if we are, amid the turmoil, almost cast down, that we should nevertheless resist and take pains to press on, until we come to what is here shown us — namely, that the age of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be known by human sense, nor can it be expressed by mouth. And to do this, we must likewise be warned to pass beyond all our own thoughts when it is a matter of trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ, and following him so as to partake of the heavenly inheritance he has acquired for us. It is not a matter of stopping at our own opinion and fancy in order rightly to treat this doctrine, as if it could be debated by human speech. Let us recognise that our faith, although it depends on hearing, will never be assured unless it receives testimony from God and his Holy Spirit — indeed a testimony that surpasses all that could be expressed by man’s tongue. For this cause we

must not be held back by our own apprehensions, to judge as seems good to us, but must know that it is an admirable and incomprehensible secret that the only Son of God became a mortal man, and submitted himself to death, so that we might be exempted from it; and that now, amid our frailties, we nevertheless do not fail to have a permanent life, which we possess by faith, until it is manifested to us at the last day, at his coming. Behold, in sum, what we must retain from this passage.

Now again the Prophet adds that he was cut off from the land of the living, and bore the stripes that were due to his people. This is a confirmation of what we said just now — namely, that the age of our Lord Jesus Christ was not for his person alone, but for the whole body of the Church, to which he is united, and with which he has, as it were, an inseparable bond. For the Prophet shows us that without this we would have to say that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ would be useless. Now this is an unbearable blasphemy, to think that the Son of God descended into the world, and endured a death so cruel, and that the judgment of God thus fell upon his head, that he bore the punishment of our sins, that he was reputed the greatest malefactor in the world, and yet that this brought no profit to his faithful — one would say it had been like a game. The Prophet, then, brings us back to this: that we should well consider to what end and purpose our Lord Jesus was thus beaten and struck. This did not come about by chance, as has been declared above. And we must not merely look at the hand of men, and of those who unjustly slew him, but we must lift up the eyes of our faith to that counsel of God by which he had ordained that Jesus Christ be sacrificed, in order to acquire for us the remission of our sins. Since this is so, then, we must always conclude

that Jesus Christ did not suffer for himself, but that he endured and suffered the stripes that were due to us.

Now here, first, we are exhorted to enter into knowledge and examination of our sins, when the death and passion of our Lord Jesus is set before us. It is true that there God displays the infinite treasures of his goodness; as indeed, when St. Paul treated of how we have been justified by our Lord Jesus Christ, and, resting upon his death and passion, may now boldly present ourselves before God and glory that he will always hold us as agreeable to him — St. Paul, I say, after having treated this doctrine, that although we are poor sinners, we shall never be cast out by God, but he will bear with us because he receives us in the name of his only Son, adds: “I beseech you, my brothers, by the bowels of the goodness and mercy of God.” In which he shows that in what Jesus Christ suffered, we have a testimony of the infinite love of God — as if he uncovered his heart to us, and set before us his very bowels to testify to us how dear we are to him, and how precious our souls are to him.

But this should nevertheless not lull us to sleep, so that each is content in his sins; for the more God has shown himself liberal in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the more we ought to feel, on the other hand, how great an enormity there is in our being enemies to him, and warring against his justice, defying him against us. For the grace God shows us in our Lord Jesus Christ must always draw us to repentance. Today the Papists try falsely to slander the doctrine we preach — namely, that we must be saved by the free goodness of God, and that we must have our refuge in Jesus Christ, knowing that it is there we have all perfection of righteousness. Yes, they say, and so everyone will live according to his own appetite, and no longer scruple to offend God? Now it is true that these dogs can bark in

such a way, since they have never tasted what the remission of sins is. For these hypocrites make full mockery of God and of all religion, and have never apprehended what it is to have transgressed the Law of God. And we see also how they think to acquit themselves. If they have sung a mass, if they have mumbled, if they have made some little trifles and petty foolery, behold God who ought indeed to be appeased, as a child with a little rattle. Behold, then, how these mockers of God can well blaspheme against the doctrine of the Gospel. But when we have known our sins, and to what end the inestimable grace of God is preached to us, it is certain we shall be touched with repentance, and shall be mortally wounded with horror and dread, seeing that God is contrary to us, since we have provoked his wrath. And this is what the Prophet meant to say here, that Jesus Christ bore the stripes that were due to us. By which he shows that we shall never truly feel to the quick what the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ has profited us, unless we are deeply touched there — at having offended our God, and having made him our judge and enemy, until we are reconciled to him by his pure goodness. Now this is often enough shown to us in holy Scripture; but the whole matter is that we apply our mind and our study to it.

Whatever the case, we see that our Lord Jesus Christ calls only those who are burdened and labouring. By this he excludes all those who are asleep in their iniquities, who flatter themselves in them, or who cast themselves headlong without any fear of God. Those, then, who are thus given over entirely to evil cannot approach our Lord Jesus Christ; this is a certain thing. For who will give us entry to him, save the voice by which he invites us? The same is true of those who blind themselves in their pride and presumption, who make themselves believe they are righteous in

themselves; it is certain that for them too the door is shut, and that they cannot hope that our Lord Jesus Christ will bring them any relief. And why? “Come to me,” he says. And to whom? To the whole world. It is true that he indeed calls the whole world, but he distinguishes: “You who are burdened and labouring.” After having called all those who have need of his help, he shows that none can be partaker of it unless he is burdened and labouring. When, then, we feel our burden, and groan under it, knowing that we can bear no more, behold how the way is made and opened for us to come to our Lord Jesus Christ, for he has his arms outstretched to receive us. As we shall also see hereafter, he was sent to preach to those who are cast down in heart. We must, then, be sacrificed in this manner in order to be conformed to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that the sacrifice he offered is our full hope — that is, that we must presume to add nothing of our own to it. Jesus Christ has fully acquired salvation for us in that he was sacrificed to God his Father; but meanwhile we must be threatened by the judgment of God, and know how enormous a thing it is that we, poor worms of the earth, should rise up against the majesty of him who created us, that we should violate his justice, especially since we are in this world to serve and honour him. Let us, then, feel this vividly in ourselves, so as to come to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now it might seem at first sight that the Prophet had here added a strange reason, in saying, “because he was cut off from the land of the living.” For, that Jesus Christ might be exalted, and now reign in heaven and on earth, it does not seem that the means would be proper, that first he should have to be as it were cut off — for he had, before the creation of the world, always this glory in which he now is, as he protested in the seventeenth chapter of St. John. Jesus Christ, then, acquired nothing new as to his divine essence.

Now to be as it were overwhelmed in death is not the passage to attain to heavenly glory; to be condemned by a mortal man is not the way to be constituted Judge of the world. But nevertheless, God has willed thus to work beyond human sense; and we must not bring here our own opinion, as if we could find fault with this counsel, which we know to be the cause and source of our salvation — but must, in all humility, glorify God that he willed that his Son should be thus cut off from the land of the living. Now the Prophet notably speaks as if Jesus Christ had been utterly abolished — and he has not meant to express merely a common death, but one that was for his extermination, so that it was as if his memory had been fully abolished and effaced. For although all men must die, and are thereby cut off from the land of the living, yet this was seen as something special in our Lord Jesus Christ: that his death was to exclude him from the ranks of men. For there was ignominy in it (as we have said); there was the curse of God; and moreover, there were, at the same time, the depths of hell — not that Jesus Christ was swallowed up in them, but nevertheless he battled against the anguishes of death.

Thus, it is not without cause that the Prophet sets him forth here as having been abolished from among men. But whatever the case, by this means he acquired a majesty in this nature he had taken from us, so that today, being our brother, he does not fail also to be our Judge. And this is how St. Paul speaks of it, that he made himself obedient unto death — indeed unto the death that was accursed. In saying that he made himself obedient, he notes what we have already declared from the Prophet — namely, that what our Lord Jesus Christ endured was voluntary. And because we are guilty before God and are his enemies, it is said that Jesus Christ subjected himself — he who had all mastery and authority, he took the form of a servant, he took

the condition of those who were under the yoke, as St. Paul says. Behold, then, how in his whole life he made himself obedient, and was willing to be under the Law. And not only that, but although he had horrible apprehensions of death, even to sweating blood and water, even to saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this bitter cup pass from me” — nevertheless he restrains himself: “Thy will be done” (he says), “and not mine.” Now upon this St. Paul adds that for this cause God his Father has exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name, so that today every knee bows before him. Let us know, then, that Jesus Christ, even in our nature, has a sovereign majesty, so that we may come to him in full confidence; for by what right is he Judge of the whole world? It is because he has not only made himself our brother, but also offered himself to be our surety, and has borne all our iniquities; he was beaten and struck by the hand of God, so that we might be delivered from the stripes we had deserved. For this cause he is now exalted, so that we may boldly approach him. Now it is true that the wicked and the devils, in spite of their teeth, must feel how the Son of God is above them, for all his enemies must be trampled underfoot. But on our part we must render him a voluntary homage, and peaceably range ourselves with him, and recognise the majesty given him in his human nature, so that we may have something with which to glory against sin.

Now that this is understood of the person of Jesus Christ appears well enough from what St. Luke recounts, that the Eunuch, having come to worship at the Temple of Jerusalem, was reading this passage, and that it was expounded to him by Philip, who was sent by God and carried off by the Angel expressly, to come to this man who was seeking God, but as a poor blind man who as yet had no knowledge. Yet this passage was so

expounded to him that with a single preaching he was converted to our Lord Jesus Christ, and asked and required to be baptized in his name. This ought to touch us deeply, for firstly we are admonished that even if at first we cannot have the pure understanding of the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of what the fruit is that we ought to gather from what is preached to us daily, we must not for that despair — but rather seek in Scripture what is unknown to us, and God will stretch out his hand to us, and, having pity on us, will direct us to the true goal. And since this poor man, who exercised himself in the reading of the Bible and did not know what it meant, was converted to our Lord Jesus Christ, let us take care not to fall asleep, but rather follow what is said in the Psalm: “Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Thus, let us so taste the doctrine that is here preached to us, that we may be brought to our Lord Jesus Christ, and receive him so that we hold to him in true constancy of faith, that we may profit by it and be confirmed to the end; and that, having truly humbled ourselves, we may come and present ourselves to our God to ask him pardon; and notwithstanding our unworthiness, that we should not fail to lift up our heads, and to conceive a true certainty that in the name of this great Redeemer we shall be accepted by God. And although he was overwhelmed for a little while, let us return to this point: that nevertheless he was exalted above the heavens, so as to draw us to himself — as he himself says in St. John, in the twelfth chapter, “When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself.”

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgment of our faults, praying to him, etc.

FIFTH SERMON

Isaiah, Chapter LIII

9. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. 10. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

The Prophet continues here the doctrine we have already seen — namely, that there was such enmity between God and us that there was no way to appease his wrath except that Jesus Christ should answer for it to the very end. For the more the Son of God suffered, the more we may gather from it how enormous our faults are, and in what detestation God holds them; since (as we have said, and shall yet recite) there is nothing superfluous or useless in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And thus, inasmuch as he

was grievously afflicted, he testified to us on the one hand his infinite goodness and the love he bore us; but we must also contemplate what our iniquities deserved before God. Now it is said here that, besides what has already been recited, our Lord Jesus Christ was exposed to every mockery and reproach of the wicked, and that they made their triumph of it; for by this word “grave” there is no doubt that the Prophet meant to express that Jesus Christ was subjected to every insult, and that God willed as it were to abandon him for a time, so that men might have full license to vilify him — as is shown us in the history of the Gospel.

For not only was Jesus Christ crucified, but all stuck out their tongues against him, and hurled their taunts, and even urged him to despair as much as it was possible. And this had already also been said in Psalm 22, that the vilest and most wretched should stick out their tongues against him. And we hear also their words: “He saved others; let him save himself if he can. And why does he not call upon his God? We shall see if he loves him so much.” Behold, then, how our Lord Jesus was wounded by the wicked, and men gave themselves over against him in all fury. And this is so that before God we might obtain such grace that all our reproaches might be hidden; and although Satan accuses us, and has cause to, nevertheless everything that might shame us is buried. Since this is so, then, that our Lord Jesus was willing to endure all the blame and reproach of men, it is so that before God all our shameful acts might be hidden and not remembered.

When the Prophet speaks here of the rich, it is as if he named the most violent, those who give themselves free rein to everything. For we know that when men are in credit, and have much wealth, they make themselves feared and dreaded, and always abuse their power. One will find very few who keep themselves in sobriety and moderation, and who are humane,

when they have the means to do evil. As for the poor, though they have much haughtiness in them, they are nonetheless restrained by force, and so the evil that is hidden will not appear. But the rich, and those who have the means, throw off all restraint, and think everything is permitted to them. In short, the Prophet meant to say that our Lord Jesus was as it were put into the hands of men, so that he might be so vilely treated that they would not even deign to reckon him among the most contemptible, but that he was as a worm of the earth, and all mockeries were addressed to him. Behold, in sum, what is treated in this first part.

Now he adds at the same time that nevertheless he had done no violence — to show that the Son of God, being innocent in his own person, was willing to receive all our burdens, by which we would have been overwhelmed; for no mortal creature could be found able to sustain what was borne and suffered by our Lord Jesus Christ. And thus again the Prophet declares to us that it was not for his own deserts, nor because he was guilty of anything, that men were thus his enemies and cruel toward him, and exercised every tyranny upon him — but it was for our sake. And indeed, if we contemplate the life of our Lord Jesus, we shall find nothing that gave anyone occasion to make any attempt against him. It is true that the Chief Priests say to Pilate that if he had not been a malefactor they would not have brought him before him. Yet if one inquires into the misdeeds of Jesus Christ, it is that he did good to the whole world — for he gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry crowds; in short, one sees nothing but all the riches of the goodness and mercy of God displayed in him.

How, then, was he so cruelly persecuted by men? This must come from elsewhere. This is why the Prophet brings us back to our faults and offences

when he speaks of the integrity of our Lord Jesus Christ. For we must not think that the Prophet here meant simply to justify the Son of God. It would be too thin a doctrine to say, “Behold, he was guilty of nothing, but conducted himself in such a way that he ought to be loved and honoured by all the world.” This is quite true, but it would be too cold a doctrine, as if our Lord Jesus needed to be excused, and to be exempted from all blame. But the Prophet has looked far higher — namely, to join these two articles he sets forth here: that God thus exposed his only Son to every reproach and insult, and yet that he was innocent. If men had risen up against him and this had not happened by the providence and counsel of God, one would say they were driven by some rage, and yet we would not find the cause; but it is said, “It is the hand of God.” For although the Priests, all the Jews in general, and the soldiers were incited by the devil to belch forth such blasphemies as we read in the Gospel against our Lord Jesus, nevertheless they did not do this without God having ordained it, says Isaiah. We must not fix our gaze only on men, to say, “They have done this or that,” but it is a judgment of God, as if he were seated on his judgment-seat, willing to deliver his only Son into the hands of tyrants and wicked men, and willing that he be thus struck down in every reproach, so that not one shame should fail to fall upon him. When, then, it is said not only that men did not spare our Lord Jesus Christ, but that God his Father did (as it is also said in St. John, that God so loved the world that he willed to declare this in the person of his Son, exposing him to so bitter a death for us) — if we thus lift up our eyes to recognise that nothing was done in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ that was not determined by God, we must conclude that if Jesus Christ was innocent (as is the truth), then our sins were shown there to the eye, and that all the blame and reproach cast upon him ought to have come

upon us. Let us recognise, then, that we are worthy that all creatures should arm themselves to demand vengeance against us; and even though they have neither mouth nor tongue, they nevertheless stand as if to uncover all our shame and all our vices, so that we might be confounded, both before heaven and before earth.

This, then, is what we must observe firstly: for either God tormented his only Son at random, or else he must show us the enormity of our sins, and what we have deserved — namely, that we should be blamed from every side. It is true that we cannot bear anything of the sort; we are so delicate that if our honour is touched, we would at once wish to strike back in fury; but this is because we do not look at what we are, and do not judge whether it is rightly or wrongly that we are blamed. Now let us note that although the reproaches we had deserved were abolished in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, we nevertheless have need for God to spur us to repentance, and that when we will not of our own free will enter into examination so as to be ashamed of ourselves, he raises up men to come and awaken us — and the more we try to cover ourselves with vain excuses, the more he brings forward our reproaches, so that they may be known. St. Paul, among the fruits of repentance, sets this one — that in thinking of our past life, we should lower our eyes, groan before God, and be ashamed of ourselves. And who does this, indeed, in such perfection as one ought? Rather we seek by hypocrisy to forget our faults, and God wishes to bring them back into our memory and account, seeing that we wish thus to hide them by subterfuges. But meanwhile let us note that we may now come and present ourselves before God and his Angels, being assured that our faults shall not be brought forward, and that our shameful deeds shall not be uncovered, since our Lord Jesus was thus blamed — and this is not by chance, nor did men

usurp anything against him apart from the will of God; but it is because God had so established it, and it was a just judgment. Now since our Lord Jesus is righteous, he must indeed bear our burdens upon him, since he is thus afflicted. And thus, let us know, first, that we are worthy of every reproach; and yet, nevertheless, that we are absolved of it, since he has acquitted us of it, and satisfaction has been made in his person. Behold, then, why and to what purpose the innocence and integrity of the Son of God is spoken of here. It is not to bring forward some excuse as far as it concerns him, but it is to make us feel what we are, and where we would have had to go, had we not been rescued and redeemed from it.

Furthermore, wishing to express a perfection so full that nothing may be said against it, the Prophet says that no deceit was found in his mouth. Now as St. James says, a man must indeed be perfect if not even a vicious word escapes him, since the tongue is so fragile above all things; and although we are far too prone to every evil, yet he who could restrain his hands and his feet, and could rule himself in his whole life so that only fear of God and every virtue is seen in it, will still not be able to hold his tongue so well that some levity, some carelessness, lie, or feint is not perceived in it. In short, it is said that in our Lord Jesus Christ no deceit was found, to show that in all his deeds and in all his words he was a mirror of holiness. Now it is certain that all the miseries we endure are the fruits of our sins. For if we had remained in the integrity in which God had placed our father Adam, all blame would cease in the world and would be abolished; it is, then, the fruit of our sins when we are blamed. Thus we must conclude that, since not the least blemish in the world was found in our Lord Jesus Christ, he bore the punishment we had deserved and merited.

And this is also why the Prophet adds that God willed to afflict him with infirmity. This word “infirmity” extends far in Scripture; for it carries with it all the things that render men contemptible — as we see in several passages. If there is poverty, sickness, weakness, or contempt; if a man has no grace, whether to speak well or to act well, if he has no bearing, no skill — this is called infirmity in Scripture. In short, this brings us back to what the Prophet had touched on above — namely, that our Lord Jesus was as it were disfigured, and that no appearance was found in him for which he might have any reputation among men. Not that he did not always have certain marks by which to be honoured as the only Son of God, but this was so obscured by what he endured that he was seen as so infirm that there was no power in him, and it did not seem he was endowed with any grace for which he ought to be prized. And we must also recollect what has been recited — namely, that he was struck and beaten by the hand of God, that he suffered the horrible anguishes of his judgment, that he bore in his body torments as terrible as anything could be; and beyond that, he was vilified by men, as if he were not worthy to be counted among the most wretched. Behold, then, how the Son of God was afflicted.

Since this is so, let us recognise that since God did not spare him, he has spared us on our part; and yet meanwhile he has given us occasion to humble ourselves, so that we no longer hold our heads high, and no longer presume to justify ourselves, or cast our sins behind our backs, but daily think on them, and be confounded, seeing the recompense that has been made for it. For is this a small thing? If there were a poor malefactor who had committed every theft and brigandage, and, after he had known his misdeeds, there were the son of a King brought to judgment to bear the punishment, and the malefactor were absolved and altogether acquitted —

should he jeer and mock, seeing that the King's Son must die and bear the pain for him? Now we are spared: behold Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who is imprisoned, and we are delivered; he is condemned, and we are absolved; he is exposed to every shame, and we are established in honour; he descends to the depths of hell, and the entry is opened for us to the Kingdom of heaven. When, then, we hear all these things, is it a matter of remaining asleep, of pleasing and flattering ourselves in our vices? Let us note well, then, the intent of the Holy Spirit, and always weigh this word — that it is God who willed to afflict him — as if he said that we should not think that our Lord Jesus abandoned himself as it were to chance, so that the wicked could torment him thus at their pleasure; for they could do nothing without the counsel of God — as St. Peter also treats it in Acts: “God,” he says, “has carried out what his hand and his counsel had determined.” Thus, not without cause, the Prophet always brings us back to this: that we must lift our senses to God, and recognise that, being Judge of the world, he willed to take satisfaction for our sins and offenses in the person of his only Son, so that we might be acquitted of them; and that not without cause was Jesus Christ thus roughly beaten, so that we might walk with our heads held high, and that we might know that God does not wish to keep in mind all our foul deeds, which made us as it were detestable before him. And when we have known this, we shall have profited greatly, not merely for a day, but for the whole time of our life. For truly this is a doctrine to which we must apply ourselves so thoroughly that, even though it seems we know it well, we shall not fail to take pains to conform ourselves to it more and more.

And this is also why the Prophet adds, for fuller expression, that he shall lay down his soul in satisfaction for sin — that is, that Jesus Christ will

forget his own life for the redemption of men and for the price of their faults and iniquities. Now here again the Prophet sets before us the voluntary obedience of the Son of God: for as he said the Father willed to afflict him, so now he says that on his part he made himself willing for it, and that he was not forced to it, but came forward to be a true sacrifice. For it was always the custom that sacrifices be presented to God by men — indeed with a free will and devotion, as one says. It was, then, necessary likewise that our Lord Jesus should offer and give himself up to the death he endured. And (as was declared yesterday) without this our rebellions would not have been repaired before God; but when he laid down his soul — that is, when he made himself ready and prepared to suffer the condemnation that was owed to us — behold how in his death we may have full confidence of salvation. And he himself declared this in St. John: “No man taketh my life from me,” he says, “but I lay it down of my own accord.” It is true that his life was taken from him when he was crucified, and we see with what inhumanity and rage those who crucified him were driven; but nevertheless they could attempt nothing against him, even had they wished it and striven for it, except insofar as all this was done according to the ordinance and decree of God the Father, as we have already declared, citing this passage from Acts: “They have done nothing but what thy hand and thy counsel had established.” But beyond this, our Lord Jesus at the same time consented and acquiesced in the sentence given against him in our name; and behold how he laid down his soul.

Now the Prophet adds notably, “for sin.” This word is applied to all sacrifices, because he who had committed some offense, coming to ask pardon, brought his sacrifice and discharged himself upon it — as if he protested: Alas, my God, behold me guilty of death before thee, I am a

criminal; to bear the punishment due me would be impossible for me — it would rather be a burden to overwhelm me entirely; but behold the remedy — I ask thee for pardon by means of the sacrifice here offered thee. This is why they were called “Sins” — namely, because the curse that men had deserved, and under which they would have been utterly overwhelmed, was as it were discharged and laid upon a calf or a sheep, or whatever was offered. Now all this was done in figure under the Law. Thus, our Lord Jesus Christ is called Sin, in that he suffered our curse, so that we might be blessed by God his Father. And let us not think that this derogates from his majesty — rather he deserves all the more to be magnified by us — as St. Paul also speaks of it in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, saying that he who knew no sin was made sin for us, so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. There is no doubt that St. Paul there meant to declare the fruit of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, as is shown us here by the Prophet. Behold, then, Jesus Christ, who is innocent, without spot or blemish. Since this is so, he must indeed have borne another’s burden. Now he bore it in such a way that he was made sin — that is, he sustained our curse. And how? So that now we might have righteousness to answer before God. For the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ is like a cloak that covers all our iniquities; and then his blood is our purging, when we are plunged into it, and are sprinkled with it by the Holy Spirit, as St. Peter speaks of it.

We see, then, now what is contained here. And behold again how, in order to detest our vices and to have horror of ourselves, we must think on what the Son of God endured; for it is so strange a thing that we ought to be ravished by it — that he who is the fountain of all righteousness was made sin; that he who is blessed, and who sanctifies all things, even to the Angels

of paradise, was made a curse. When one speaks thus, we find this thing hard and strange, and yet we do not have the sense and prudence to apply it to our own instruction. For since the Son of God went so far, could we have found a remedy anywhere else? It is certain that no; and we can easily judge that there was no man, no Angel, nothing whatsoever that could rescue us, but that we needed to have our refuge in the Son of God. And all the more execrable was that devil (who has been executed here) — Servetus: for he falsified and polluted the Bible, in saying that all this was prophesied of Cyrus, a pagan, an idolater; and he stripped our Lord Jesus Christ of what is so properly his own, when, as Isaiah had painted this as it were in a picture, the moment Jesus Christ was crucified, things could not have been clearer, more plain. And this devil went to such an enormity that he stripped our Lord Jesus Christ of all his dignity and office, and said it was a pagan who suffered for the people — indeed, that through his ambition he fought, and through his avarice, and that for that he received his wages. But this is a terrible falsification of this beautiful Prophecy; and indeed, that sense which this wretch invented was never conceived by any living creature. For although there have been many heretics who have gone astray in perverting the doctrine of holy Scripture, nevertheless they never went so far. But it was necessary that every sign of reprobation should be in this unhappy creature. Thus, all the more must we note well, when the Prophet brings us back to our Lord Jesus Christ, that it is so (firstly) that we might be confounded in ourselves, and then that we might magnify the inestimable goodness of our God, in that he willed that his only Son should be ordained as sin for us; and that our Lord Jesus Christ did not refuse this, but, as one forgetting himself, had such care for our salvation that he was willing to descend to the very depths of horror, in order to sustain all our curse.

Now from this we must also retain that there is no other means of being acquitted before God, save that the satisfaction of the sacrifice, which was offered once for us, should come forward. It is true that the world always wants to invent I know not what to pay God (as we have already said above), and we see this well enough among the Papists, who have many petty trifles to appease the wrath of God. And indeed, they say we cannot be absolved without satisfaction, for even though God, by his free goodness, remits our guilt, the punishment nonetheless remains, and is retained, until each one has acquitted himself. And behold on what purgatory is founded — for since we cannot satisfy in our lifetime, and there always remains some remainder or arrears, we must, they say, bear the pain outside of this world, and it must serve to pay God. Behold the lies and dreams of Satan, by which the poor world has been seduced. All the more, then, must we note well this doctrine — namely, that just as under the Law God had not said, “You shall serve me in such a manner and such as seems good to you,” but had appointed sacrifices and ordained the ceremonies contained in the Law, and one had to abide there without inventing some new service or means to acquire grace — so likewise today we must content ourselves with the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that it is the sole means by which God will be gracious and favourable to us, and by which also we shall be received and adopted by him. This, then, is notably what the Prophet meant to express.

Now he says that he shall prolong his days, and that he shall see a lasting age, and that the will (or the good pleasure) of God shall prosper in his hand. He brings us back again to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we might be all the more assured that we can come to him: for had he remained in death as one vanquished, we could not be justified and vivified

by his grace. How would death of itself bring righteousness, if it stood alone? And how also would it bring life? But since, with the sacrifice of his death, there is the resurrection, then we have full confidence. We see how victory has been acquired for us over sin, that we might be reputed righteous; and death is as it were abolished in us, so that life may reign there. It is true that this refers first to the person of the Son of God, as we have already declared, that he died according to the infirmity of his flesh, but the heavenly power of his Holy Spirit was shown in his resurrection — as also he gave this testimony: “Destroy this temple, and I will rebuild it in three days.” Thus, behold how the Son of God, as to his person, saw a great age; for he was not raised merely to show himself to the world for a little time and to die again, but, after having manifested himself to his disciples, after having made them witnesses of his resurrection, he ascended into heaven, and was exempted from the frailty of the human condition. This, then, is how we may found our confidence in him, seeing that he has all lordship over death, and that he has even conquered the devil, and triumphed over him — indeed to such a degree that, after having offered himself in sacrifice, he was received and exalted to this power and empire, of which we have made mention above.

Now meanwhile we must also note that all this belongs to the whole body of the Church, for Jesus Christ does not wish to be separated from it. And indeed, it is said that he shall have seed. It is true that we are called brothers of Jesus Christ, for we cannot be children of God on any other title. He who is beloved and only must receive us, and must join us so fully to himself that by adoption we have what he alone has by nature; but this does not prevent us from being, meanwhile, as children begotten of his seed. For what is the true seed of the Church? It is true that it is the Word of the

Gospel, as St. Peter shows. And indeed it is here that is verified what we have already seen in the fortieth chapter, that the Word of God abides eternally, because by it we are made incorruptible, when the Word of God profits in us, as it is given us by the Holy Spirit. Behold, then, the seed by which we are regenerated to heavenly life. But we must still come to our Lord Jesus Christ. For how does the Gospel have this office and property of begetting us as children of God? It is because the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was a true seed to give us life.

Thus, not without cause it is said here that he shall see an age of long duration. And so we must again conclude that the good our Lord obtained in his resurrection was not for himself in private, but that it was to make us partakers of it, and to call us into his company, since we are members of his body. Now meanwhile we are admonished not to seek even a single drop of life in ourselves, but to take it wholly from our Lord Jesus Christ. How, then, shall it be that God will recognise us as his children? How shall we have a place in the Church? How shall we be reckoned of his flock? We must come back to this: that we communicate with our Lord Jesus. Behold how God accepts us to himself, behold our birth, behold our first origin. Let men now go boast of their free will, by which they imagine themselves prepared to receive the grace of God. For he who is not yet formed in his mother's womb, what industry can he have to make himself of value? Let us know, then, since our principle, and our first creation, is that we be begotten in Jesus Christ, that we can do nothing, and that nothing proceeds from our own power, but that we have everything from the free goodness that is communicated to us in him. Behold, in sum, what we must retain.

And meanwhile also, so that we may take a still better relish for his death and passion, it is said, because he laid down his soul for sin (that is, for

satisfaction or for sacrifice), that he shall see his seed. For we show well enough that we wish to efface all hope of salvation, if we do not magnify the goodness of God in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. And indeed, those who through pride disdain to rest upon Jesus Christ because he was crucified, show well that they do not know the purpose of it: for without this, what would we be? There would be no Church in the world, there would be no salvation; in short, there would be no hope of good; we would be all confounded, all lost and damned without any remedy, except that Jesus Christ laid down his soul and thereby acquired us. And this is also why Scripture so often shows us that we have been purchased at a very dear price. Behold, then, what we must retain.

Now he says (finally) that the good pleasure of God shall prosper in his hand. The word the Prophet uses signifies a human will and a free favour; for it would not be enough for our Lord Jesus merely to execute the will of God, but it must be a will of love, in testimony of his fatherly affection. Moses well executed the will of God in publishing the Law; and yet behold the thunders and lightnings that terrify everyone — there is nothing but threats of death. And why? Because the Law could bring nothing but wrath. Men needed to feel there a horrible condemnation, and to be terrified. But there is another will of God, which was declared in Jesus Christ — that he willed to receive us to himself in his pity, and willed to abolish our sins, and to acquit us of the damnation in which we were. This, then, as to the property of this word which the Prophet uses here, when he says the good pleasure of God shall prosper.

Now there follows further “in his hand,” which signifies that Jesus Christ must be minister and dispenser of the grace of God for our salvation. It is true that God could well have rescued us from death by another means; but

he did not will it, nor was it good so; wherefore he established our Lord Jesus Christ, so that by him we should be redeemed and reconciled — in short, that by him we should obtain what is required for our salvation.

Let us now come to gather the sum of this statement. It is said that the good pleasure and the free favour of God shall prosper in the hand of Jesus Christ. And why does the Prophet speak thus? Because we are inclined to distrust, and also because we have many obstacles that make us lose heart, the Holy Spirit comes forward and declares to us that, whatever happens, the grace of God will come to its effect and will be accomplished. However much, then, the devil schemes to prevent the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ from profiting us, and from producing its fruit in us; however much, on our part, we are so malicious and perverse as to turn away from it, so that it seems we would wish to make it useless — nevertheless God will overcome by his infinite goodness. In sum, the Prophet meant to say in this passage that not only was the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ sufficient for the salvation of the world, but that God will make it prevail, and that we shall see its fruit, and shall feel it and even experience it. From this we must gather that there is always a Church in the world, and that the devil may well scheme and make every effort to overthrow the building of God, but whatever happens, Jesus Christ must prevail, and the grace of which he was minister and dispenser must profit and be fulfilled among men. And this is what is said in Psalm 2: “Why do the kings of the earth rise up? And why have they made plots with the peoples?” Nevertheless, God must in the end carry out his counsel. It is true they will scheme much, but he who dwells in heaven will laugh at them until he displays his arm in his wrath. Thus, let us note well that here the Holy Spirit has meant to assure us that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ will always have its

efficacy, so that the Church of God may endure, and never be ruined by the assaults, storms, and whirlwinds that its enemies may raise against it with their chief, Satan. And even this word “prosperity” is used to show that God will make the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ flourish, so that it may bear fruit more and more; and when it seems altogether annihilated, that God will raise it up again, and overcome all that might hinder it from reaching its goal.

And furthermore, we ought also to apply this to each one of us, and not doubt that although we drag our wings and are still held captive under sin, God will nevertheless deliver us from the captivity in which we are, will complete what he has begun in us, and will correct what is still lacking. And how? We must come to our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is he who puts his hand to it, as the charge is committed to him, and he has received this office from God his Father. Let us be content, then, that since he is ordained minister of our salvation, there will be no failure that he will not accomplish by his means, since it is thus determined. Now meanwhile let us apply to what St. Paul adds in the passage we have cited, what is shown here, so that we may be partakers of the fruit of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ — that is, to listen to the message that is daily brought to us. For it would not suffice that Jesus Christ had suffered in his own person, and that he was made sacrifice for us; but we must be certified of it by the Gospel — that we receive this testimony, and do not doubt that we have righteousness in him, knowing that he has made satisfaction for our offences. And that upon this we should wait for God to continue his work through this Redeemer, and to continue it in such a way that it be increased more and more, until he has brought it to its end and its issue.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgment of our faults, praying to him, etc.

SIXTH SERMON

Isaiah, Chapter LIII

11. He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Although the Prophet has added this statement to confirm what he had already said — namely, that the death of the Son of God would not be useless, but would produce an excellent fruit for the salvation of the world — nevertheless he expresses more than he had before; for firstly he shows us the love our Lord Jesus has borne us, saying that he shall be satisfied because he will have acquired us eternal life by his death; and then secondly he shows that he would suffer not only in his body but also in his soul. We know that this word “to be satisfied” or “content” carries with it great desire. For many things will happen that will not touch us at all; even though they be to our profit, this does not mean we shall rest in them fully.

A man may have many things, and yet not hold himself content, for perhaps he does not have the chief thing, or does not have the whole. But the Prophet shows that the Son of God will be fully content, having no regard for himself, when he sees that his Church is acquired for him, and that poor sinners are drawn out of the curse in which they were, so as to be reconciled to God and to obtain the inheritance of heaven. In short, we see here how our Lord Jesus had no regard for his own person, but was ravished by the love he bore us, so as to seek there all his contentment, as if he had no other desire, affection, or care.

Now here again we must note that, provided we seek by faith the good acquired for us in our Lord Jesus Christ, and which is daily offered us by the Gospel, we shall not be frustrated of our hope. For the Prophet says “he shall see,” to express that not only has God willed to declare his mercy to us in the person of his Son, when he exposed him to death for us, but that he will bring it about by his Holy Spirit that this death shall not be without fruit, and that many shall see that it was not without cause or in vain that he endured so much, and shall know it by experience. Let us, then, give entry to our Lord Jesus Christ, so that he may make us partakers of the fruit of his death and passion, approaching him by faith; and let us not doubt that when we thus open our hearts, God will add this benefit besides — that just as he willed his Son to be our Redeemer, so too we shall truly enjoy the good he has brought us, and shall know that it is not a vain thing that he endured so much for us. Behold, then, what we must retain from this passage.

As for the second point we proposed, it is shown here that not only was Jesus Christ to be beaten, struck, and afflicted by the hand of his Father, to bear the chastisement we had deserved, but that he was also to be anguished in his soul. It is not said here merely that he shall see the fruit of his stripes,

of his affliction, and of his death, as the Prophet had spoken before, but of the travail and the distress of his soul. For the word he uses carries this meaning. He means, then, to express that Jesus Christ was not only crucified, after having endured great torments in his body, but that he had to go further still — namely, that he would be in sorrow for us, and would sustain the sorrows of death, and would be subjected even to that, in order to justify us. And indeed, what would it be if our Lord Jesus had suffered only in appearance, and only before men? For if he had suffered only in his body, he would be Redeemer of bodies only. But since the chief thing we must hope of him is that we should feel and be persuaded that death is no longer mortal to us, and that we are freed from the curse of God, it was necessary that our Lord Jesus should feel these very points in himself, and that, coming before God, he should be there like a poor malefactor before his judge. We know that the sin of man carries with it not merely a temporal death, which is the separation of body from soul, but the sense that God is against us, the horror of his judgment. And what is that? A thing more unbearable and horrible than anything else. It was necessary, then, that our Lord Jesus should come to this point in order to deliver us; and this is what the Prophet now declares. And here we see all the more how much God has loved us, and what are the treasures of his grace and infinite goodness that he has displayed toward us; and we may well recognise also what solicitude and what zeal our Lord Jesus Christ had for our salvation, when he did not spare himself, and willed not only that his body should answer for the satisfaction of our sins, but that he himself should be terrified, as one who was to feel the judgment of God, and who apprehended what that curse God pronounces with his mouth deserves — namely, that it is to swallow us up in hell, that it is an abyss to overwhelm us entirely. It was necessary, then,

that Jesus Christ should feel this. And indeed, when we see that he sweated blood and water because of it, that Angels had to descend to comfort him, we must indeed say that this sorrow was extreme, since never was there a like example in the world.

Behold, then, what is signified by this word “travail” or “distress” of the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now it is true (as St. Peter says) that he could not be held by the sorrows of hell, but he had to do battle against them; he had the victory, but it was not without great and difficult combat. Furthermore, now we must gather from this passage that although we must die, this does not mean that the death of our Lord Jesus Christ does not have its effect, and does not profit us as much as is expedient for us; for the death to which we are now subject is but a reminder of the curse of God. If we were altogether exempted from dying, we would not know the grace acquired for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. And we know how much need we have to be humbled, and that God should always make us feel his wrath; for even though he wishes to exempt us from it, we must still think on it, so as to groan because of our sins and all the more magnify his mercy. Thus, the death now common to all men is not, properly speaking, mortal, as regards those who have faith in Jesus Christ, for they only pass from this world in order to live unto God. Let us know, then, that in dying we have something to console ourselves with, knowing that God will be favourable to us, and will turn this evil into good, and will make death (which before carried a mortal wound) serve as it were as medicine. And how? Because we do not apprehend that God wishes to be our judge in all rigour, and to display his vengeance against us, when we have Jesus Christ in the midst who shows that he has satisfied for us. There is not, then, that horrible apprehension in death which used to confound us, even to plunge us into despair — but we

come freely to commit ourselves into the hands of God. For as it is said that Jesus Christ commended his Spirit to God his Father, let us know that this was to constitute himself guardian of our souls; and therefore, we may safely commit them into his hand, for he has protested that nothing shall perish of all that has been given him. Behold, then, of what use to us is it that our Lord Jesus was thus anguished, and that besides enduring death and other torments, he also had this terror of feeling God as his judge, as if he must endure the sorrows of hell.

Now far from this derogating from the majesty of the Son of God, it is rather so that we might know all the better how much he prized our salvation, and how dear we and our souls were to him. However much, then, he was annihilated (as we have seen above), however much he had neither form nor figure to be desired among men, nevertheless this very annihilation was to exalt him all the more. And indeed, although God has shown his loftiness and his infinite majesty in the creation of the world, nevertheless in the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ we have a fuller argument for glorifying God, since for us and for our salvation Jesus Christ abased and lowered himself; and although he did not strip himself of his divine majesty, it was nevertheless hidden for a time, and was not perceived among men. This is, in sum, what the Prophet treats here, regarding how our Lord Jesus was anguished. Now in this we see that he forgot himself, as it were, and had no regard for himself. And the reason is that he was wholly devoted to our salvation; and thus he answered for us both in body and in soul, and was wholly our surety. And in this we see that the wretches who today would abolish this doctrine are without religion and without faith, like mastiff dogs that bark and know not why. The hypocrites of the Papacy, though they do not understand this except in part, are

compelled to confess, whatever else, that Jesus Christ felt terrible horrors. It is true they cannot define fully what these were, but whatever the case, they babble of them.

But here there are villains more monkish than those who dwell in the depths of those caves and brothels from which they have come, who have brought their stench and their infection into the Church of God. It is, then, certain that these wretches, who today bear the name of ministers, and even occupy the place, and yet make of the Church of God a pigsty, are dogs who have no religion, and who seek only to extinguish and efface from the memory of men all the grace of God, and what our Lord Jesus has done for us.

Now when we see Satan thus driving them, and that they are as brazen as harlots, all the more must we hold fast to this article of faith — that not only was Jesus Christ condemned by Pilate, an earthly judge, so that we might be absolved before God his Father; not only was he crucified, so that we might be delivered from the curse; not only did he endure death, so that we might be set free from it — but also so that today we might have peace in our consciences, and might rejoice, feeling the fatherly love of our God, and might call upon him with full mouth, being assured that he will receive us, and that we shall be pleasing to him. It was necessary that Jesus Christ should be plunged into these horrors that he felt, that he should be as a poor malefactor — he who was the Lamb of God without blemish, who was the mirror and pattern of all holiness and perfection — that he should have answered and been our surety even to that point, as if he must be condemned to the depths of hell. Furthermore (as we have already said) he overcame and surmounted those sorrows, but he had first to fight. Behold, then, what Isaiah meant, saying that Jesus Christ would have anguishes in

his soul; but we see that he was nonetheless content, provided that we were redeemed by this means. And today we must all the more take courage, knowing that if we have true obedience of faith to receive the inestimable good acquired for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall feel that it is not in vain that he suffered so much for us. And all the less excusable will be our ingratitude, if we do not come with burning zeal to him, so as to enjoy this inestimable good into which he has entered, and of which he has taken possession in our name, when he declares to us that he has reconciled us to God his Father, and that he is ready to receive us as his children. Behold, in sum, what we must retain from this passage.

Now the Prophet adds that he shall justify many by his knowledge — indeed, my righteous Servant, he says. As for the word “Servant,” we have seen above that this does not derogate from the majesty of our Lord Jesus Christ; for although he was master of all creatures, nevertheless he acquired yet a new empire in the person of Mediator, and in our nature, according to what St. Paul treats in the second chapter of Philippians, and we have already partly seen it: yet he willed to make himself a servant and to humble himself under this condition. Thus, it is not in vain that he is called servant of God. And we ought not to find this strange, for it is far stranger that Jesus Christ should be servant of men — the Son of God, he who had equal glory with his Father (as it is spoken of in the seventeenth chapter of St. John) — that he should abase himself to this condition of wishing to serve us; nevertheless, it is so. And this is also why he says: “I am among you, and converse among you, as one who serves, not as one who has mastery.” Now since Jesus Christ descended so far as to make himself servant of men, it is not without cause that he is here called servant of God. And indeed, he could not otherwise redeem us — I mean, according to the

decree of God his Father, as we have already declared above. For without any means God could well have saved us, but we must always presuppose that it was necessary for life to be acquired for us by Jesus Christ. Now to do this, he had at the same time to be a servant, for he could not otherwise render obedience to God his Father; and without that obedience he could not repair our transgressions and iniquities. Behold, then, why he is notably called Servant, and indeed righteous.

In short, the Prophet signifies that, since we have been rebels against God, and are still, until he has reformed us by his Holy Spirit — and even after he has touched us with a good disposition, we are unprofitable servants, and stumble at every step, and even when it seems the service we render him ought indeed to be accepted by him, there will always be something to find fault with, indeed it deserves to be rejected — it was necessary, in order to efface our defects, that the service and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ should be pleasing to God — as it also carries with it a proper satisfaction. This, in sum, is what he meant to say. And from this we must gather that Jesus Christ has justified us, not merely inasmuch as he was God, but by the power of his obedience, in that he took our nature, and in it willed to fulfil the Law which was impossible for us and was a burden to crush us all and break our necks. In that, then, our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself for our salvation, and was obedient to God his Father, behold how we are justified by him.

Now he speaks notably also of “knowledge,” to express that it is not enough that our Lord Jesus should have accomplished in his person all that was necessary for our salvation, but that we must apprehend it by faith. There is, then, the knowledge required. For how many unbelievers do we see perish, to whom the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ serves

only for their greater condemnation, because they trample his sacred blood underfoot and reject the grace offered them? Thus, although our Lord Jesus Christ is like the serpent that was lifted up on high in the desert, to give healing to all the sick, nevertheless on our part we can have no profit from him except by knowledge of him. For as it was necessary also for the brazen serpent to be looked upon in the desert, and without this look, the bite of the serpents was always mortal, so today the Gospel is to us like a scaffold, so as to lift up our Lord Jesus Christ — or rather it is like a banner, to represent him to us before our very eyes, and to make us look upon him from afar. In short, there is no obscurity (as St. Paul says) when the Gospel is preached; there one contemplates the grace of God that appears in our Lord Jesus Christ; otherwise, one must have one's eyes bound by Satan. Whatever the case, we must note well what is said here — that Jesus Christ justifies only by his knowledge. It is indeed true that the substance of our salvation must precede; for when it is said that we are righteous by faith, this is not to exclude Jesus Christ, nor to exclude the mercy of God, but rather it is to lead and conduct us to it.

But to have an even easier understanding of all this, we must note first that we are not righteous in ourselves, since we must borrow our righteousness from elsewhere; for if we could so order our life that in every respect it corresponded to the Law and the will of God, we would then deserve to be accepted by him. And why? He must indeed acknowledge the good, since he is the fountain of it — otherwise he would deny himself. If, then, we could conform our life to the Law of God, and have such perfection as he demands, it is certain we would be righteous by our own works, and then Jesus Christ would be useless to us — as St. Paul also disputes. Thus, on the contrary, when we are compelled to borrow our

righteousness from our Lord Jesus Christ, and to seek it there, this means we are destitute of it ourselves. Let us conclude, then, that the whole world is condemned of sin, and that God shows us that there is in us nothing but curse, when it is said that we must come to Jesus Christ. This for one point. Now it is true that the ancient Philosophers have spoken much of virtue; it was also a common opinion that one must be agreeable to God by living well — but what has all that profited? For the best among men, and those thought altogether irreproachable, have had nothing but hypocrisy, and others have been given over to every evil; and those thought the ablest and most renowned above others have nevertheless had enormous vices. Thus, let men presume as much as they wish, and think however they like about living virtuously; when they have done all they could, and when many laws and rules have been laid down to guide them, they will nevertheless never by that means be righteous before God. And why? Because sin is rooted in us, and cannot be purged by human remedies. In short, we shall not be justified by going to school to men, however much they teach virtue. Moreover, behold God publishing his Law, in which true and perfect righteousness is contained — as Moses protests: “Behold, I declare to thee today good and evil; I show thee the way of life and of death.” But can it justify us in the meantime? Can it so rule us that God accepts our life as good and holy? On the contrary — for the Law engenders nothing but death; it doubles our condemnation; it inflames the wrath of God. These are the titles attributed to it in holy Scripture.

Since this is so, then, that the Law of itself cannot justify us, how can men, by their doctrine, and by their statutes and rules, bring us to true righteousness? Now if one asks how the Law of God cannot justify, and why — the reason is the one I have already touched on. It is true that God

shows us well enough in his Law how we might and could attain to life, if we were such that we had no hindrance on our own part. The Law of God, then, speaks, but it does not reform our hearts. When God shows us, “This is what I require of you,” yet if all our appetites, our affections, and our thoughts are contrary to what he commands, not only are we condemned, but the Law, as I have said, renders us all the more guilty before God. For beforehand we would have sinned through ignorance; but now, knowingly, we resist God, so that it seems we wish to defy him. For we know that the servant who knows the will of his master and does it not shall be beaten with a double stripe. This is why it is said that the Law engenders nothing but wrath — that is, that it inflames the wrath of God still more against us, when we have been taught by it. It brings us death, and how? Because there we contemplate that we are altogether damned and lost. And does it not announce life at all? No — but we cannot attain to it meanwhile. There must, then, be another way of being justified — and that is in the Gospel. For in the Gospel God does not say, “Behold, you shall do this and that,” but, “Believe that my only Son is your Redeemer; embrace his death and passion as the remedy for all your maladies; plunge yourself into his blood, and it will be your purging, you shall be cleansed by it; rest upon the sacrifice he has offered me, and behold how you shall be righteous.”

Since, then, the Gospel brings us back to our Lord Jesus Christ, and commands us to seek in him all righteousness, because by the free mercy of God he has satisfied for us — behold how we shall be justified by knowledge of him. And this is what St. Paul treats in the tenth chapter of Romans; for there he makes a comparison of two righteousnesses, the one of the Law, the other of faith. He says that the Law indeed has righteousness — indeed when it says, “He who shall do these things shall

live in them.” For it is true that if we could fulfil all the commandments of God, and our life were so well ordered that there was neither vice nor blemish in it, God has promised us that he would accept us as righteous, that the reward would be entirely assured, and that we would not be frustrated of it. Behold, then, a certain thing as to the righteousness of the Law; but meanwhile, who does what the Law commands? We go quite the opposite way, and it seems (as I have already said) that we wish to defy God. Behold, then, the door shut to us as regards the righteousness of the Law, and there remains for us nothing but the curse of God. But in the Gospel it is said, “Behold, the Word is in thy heart and in thy mouth.” How so? St. Paul, speaking thus, shows us that in order to have the Word in our heart and in our mouth, we must come to Jesus Christ; for it is he who writes by his Holy Spirit and engraves the doctrine of salvation, of which we would otherwise merely have had our ears struck, in vain and without any profit. Since, then, our Lord Jesus Christ places his word in the heart, let us pray him to grant us the grace to have a pure and sincere affection, so as to seek in him all that we lack. Behold how we shall be justified by knowledge of him — for it is not a matter of bringing some satisfaction that would content God; it is not a matter of coming to account, to say, “Lord, we have deserved that thou shouldst receive us”; but rather, “We confess that we are poor sinners, that we are subject to thy judgment, that it is impossible to satisfy it on our part, and that only Jesus Christ ought to be recognised as sufficient to satisfy it.” Let us confess this, then, with all humility; let us admit that we are lost creatures, brought to nothing, until our Lord Jesus stretches out his hand to draw us from the abysses and depths of hell. Now, have we confessed this? Let us also recognise that our Lord Jesus supplies all our defects. If we are soiled and full of filth, his

blood is our washing, by which we shall be cleansed; if we are plunged in debts, not only to God but to Satan as our adversary, the payment has been made in the death and passion of the Son of God; if we are polluted and detestable, the sacrifice that our Lord Jesus offered is of a sweet savour, so that all the evil that is in us is effaced. Behold, then, how we are justified by the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now following this doctrine, firstly we see that we must not seek our righteousness far off, since we shall find it in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that he clothed himself with our nature and made himself our brother. And this is of great importance, because if we were justified by the divine essence of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would have to be far removed from his righteousness, and could never attain to it. But when it is said that the righteousness he gives us was accomplished in his human nature, behold how we can come to him more intimately. And this is also why Satan has wished to confuse this doctrine, and there have been fanatics who have dreamed that our Lord Jesus justifies his faithful inasmuch as he is God. But this would require (as I have already said) that we seek our righteousness far off, and this would serve to make us lose courage and to make us faint before we had come to him. But on the contrary, he calls us to himself, in that he made himself a mortal man, and constituted himself Mediator, so that there we might seek our righteousness.

Thus, behold one point we must observe; and for the rest let us always come to this knowledge. And since unbelievers shut the door on themselves, and deprive themselves of the good they ought to receive by our Lord Jesus Christ, let us have our ears attentive to receive the testimony given us in the Gospel. And this is what St. Paul says in the passage we cited yesterday: that Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, and that today this

is accomplished in the Gospel. “We carry the embassy in the name of Jesus Christ” (says St. Paul), “beseeching you that you be reconciled to God.” St. Paul places there a double reconciliation. The one is that which was made in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he was sacrificed for us. The other is that which we obtain each day by faith, when God declares to us that if we have angered him, he is always ready to forget all our faults, and to put them under his feet, provided that we accept the good he offers us. Let us learn, then, to prize the knowledge of the Gospel better than we do, and to recognise that it is to make us partakers of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. For we are grafted into his body, we are made his members, and all that he has is made common to us, and is made proper to us by the Gospel; and this is also why St. Paul says that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all believers — showing thereby that if we refuse to be saved by the Gospel, it is as if we rejected the salvation God willed to acquire for us in the person of his Son, and to which he daily invites and exhorts us. Behold, in sum, what we must observe.

Now all the more must we prize the Gospel, when we see that in the Papacy this has been obscured, indeed altogether effaced, so that poor souls remain always famished. For although preaching there is done after a fashion, nevertheless poor people are always left in doubt and in scruple; one is never certified that God is gracious. And the Papists even say it would be presumption if we were assured of the love of God, and that we must have of it only some conjecture. But this is to annihilate the fruit of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us learn, then, to profit so thoroughly by the Gospel that we may be certified that God loves us, and accepts us as his own children. And therefore (as I have already said) let us

prize and magnify this grace all the more, when we see that most of the world is so far removed from it.

Now there remains also what the Prophet adds, that he laid down his soul for many. By this he signifies that we are not justified by faith through having some vain imagination merely to believe that there is a God, and to know in a confused way and by a general apprehension that Jesus Christ suffered death and passion — but rather that by faith we are made partakers of the sacrifice that was offered, so that God might be favourable to us, and no longer impute our faults and iniquities to us. The Papists are so dull and brutish that when they wish to show we are not justified by faith alone, they argue: We are justified by the mercy of God — therefore it is not by faith alone; then, We are justified by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ — therefore it is no longer by faith alone; as one who would say, We are warmed by heat, therefore it is not by the sun; we are illumined by light, therefore it is not by the sun. Now let us note that when faith is spoken of, it is to bring us back to the Gospel; for (as I have said) there are two kinds of righteousness here. By the Law it is said that we shall be righteous when we have fulfilled all that God commands us there. Now it is impossible to attain to it — we are, then, stripped of this righteousness; we are altogether cut off from it. There is the other righteousness, namely that which we find in Jesus Christ, when, having well examined ourselves, we are convicted of our malice, and have nothing but dread, since we feel that God is armed in vengeance against us, so that nothing remains but for him to strike us down and overwhelm us. When, then, we have come to this point, and to so great an extremity, behold Jesus Christ, who gives us the remedy to soften all our sorrows — namely, that he certifies to us that he alone will suffice for us to

attain the salvation he has acquired for us. Behold how we are justified by faith.

We see, then, that the Prophet speaks in exactly the same way as St. Paul spoke after him. It is that firstly we must come to the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and contemplate him there crucified for us; and then, that by the Gospel we may be assured that what Jesus Christ did and suffered belongs to us today, and is applied to us, since the Father does not wish that this death should have been useless, but that it should be a sacrifice of full power and effect, which bears fruit daily in us. Behold, in sum, what we must retain from this passage.

Meanwhile let us note that this knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is not an idle thing — as many, when told of the knowledge of the Gospel, understand it to mean that it is enough to conceive by some fleeting thought what is taught; but it is that we hold our Lord Jesus Christ for the sole cause of our salvation. Which cannot be done unless we feel to the quick that we are lost in ourselves, and then that God, according as he once willed to receive us into mercy, today makes this prevail in us. And indeed, it is impossible for us to attain to this knowledge unless we are illumined by the Holy Spirit — which, when we have it, is already an infallible sign that God wills to work in us, so as to put us in possession of his righteousness, from which before we were far removed. Behold, then, God who will indeed cause the Gospel to be preached; but this is not enough — we shall understand nothing but gibberish (as one says) until we are touched within by his Holy Spirit (behold whence faith proceeds); and then we are good and true disciples of Jesus Christ, to feel the fruit of this doctrine. This is what is shown us here by the Prophet.

Now he speaks again of how Jesus Christ bore the sins, to show that satisfaction is in him, and that our sins would be a burden to overwhelm us into the depths of hell, were we not relieved of it by our Lord Jesus Christ. For what does sin carry with it, but the wrath of God? If God merely lifts his finger, it is enough to destroy and ruin the whole world — as it is said that at his mere breath the rocks melt, the mountains dissolve, and flow away like wax. If, then, God gives the least sign of his fury and his wrath, there is nothing so firm in the world that it does not melt away; and what shall become of us, who are such fragile creatures, when God shows us a rigorous face as Judge, and calls us to account? We shall not even need to hear the voice of his mouth — merely the sign he gives to summon us will be an abyss to swallow us up. Thus, our sins must indeed be an unbearable burden to us. Now there is an infinite number of them in us, and we do not have shoulders to sustain them and to remain standing beneath them. But as for Jesus Christ, although he suffered in the weakness of his flesh, he was always sustained by the power of the Spirit given him. And behold how he made his triumphs even upon the cross, as St. Paul speaks of it to the Colossians. Thus, we must always come back to what the Prophet says — as also St. Peter is a good expositor of it in his first Canonical Epistle, saying that on the tree he bore our sins. It is true that it was not the power of the tree that helped our Lord Jesus Christ to bear our sins; but he says he bore them on the tree, in that, being crucified, he was as one accursed of God, and received all the curse in which we would have been plunged. He received all this, then, so as to make us feel the fruit of it, and to make us enjoy the victory of which today he has made us partakers. Thus, if we are burdened within ourselves, let us come to Jesus Christ, so as to be relieved; and let us recognise the means — namely, that we are acquitted by him of

all our debts, so that we must no longer imagine that we could bring any satisfaction or payment when coming to account before God. We must, then, always begin at this end — to be utterly confounded — and for the rest, let us not doubt that we are now discharged, since our Lord Jesus has borne our burden; and that we may hold our heads high, knowing that we are freed from the judgment of God.

This, then, is in sum what we must retain here — that since we have once been sanctified by the sacrifice Jesus Christ offered, when he dedicated himself to the service of God, as he then protested — today we must discharge our sins upon him, seeking in him full righteousness; and to do this, that we should lend our ear to the Gospel, knowing that there God invites us to himself with a gracious voice, and does not require of us what would be impossible for us, and which could only lead us to despair — as it was said by the Law, “Cursed be he who does not fulfil all these things” (which was to exclude us altogether from salvation) — but that here it is declared to us that if we are poor sinners, God applies to us the fitting remedy — namely, that we be justified in our Lord Jesus Christ, coming there like poor beggars, so as to be relieved in such want as we are in. And furthermore, let us know, when our Lord is named “righteous,” that this is to show that he justifies us, in that he took our nature, so that we might have private access to God to enjoy such a good; and let us not say, “Who shall ascend above the clouds?” as St. Paul, citing this passage from Moses, shows that when the Gospel is preached to us, we must no longer make long discourses to know whether God is near us. For that would be to tear Jesus Christ from his heavenly throne. Likewise let us no longer allege, “Who shall descend into the abyss?” For Jesus Christ has descended there, so that we might be assured he has drawn us out of it, and that now he still

performs the office of Mediator, and wills to make us so fully partakers of his righteousness that he wills us to be clothed with it, to possess it, that it should dwell in us, and that by it we should be raised up in full confidence unto God his Father, so that we might invoke him without any doubt.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgment of our faults, praying to him, etc.

SEVENTH SERMON

Isaiah, Chapter LIII

12. Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The Prophet declares here, in sum, that our Lord Jesus not only conquered death by dying, but also had the right to seize the substance of his enemies and to take their spoil, as when a victory has been won, this too follows. It is true that our Lord Jesus did not enrich himself with the goods of this world; but nevertheless, it was to this end, as we have said, that he did battle with death. We know that Satan, who is the prince of this world, had to be cast out of his empire, for without that our condition would have been more than miserable. It was also necessary that sin no longer hold sway. Behold how our Lord Jesus has despoiled his enemies — namely, in that we

are no longer under the tyranny of Satan, nor under the servitude of sin, but are set at liberty. And indeed St. Paul, citing what is said in the Psalm, shows how this passage was fulfilled, when he says that God ascended on high, and led captivity captive, that he held his enemies bound and fettered, without any power to resist him, and that he received homage among men with tribute. It is true that David there speaks by way of similitude, for when he says that God ascended on high, it is because he had for some time seemed to dissemble, and seemed as it were asleep, when things were so confused that the faithful groaned without any help, while the wicked disported themselves in every license. When, then, there are such troubles in this world, and, though we invoke God, it does not seem we profit anything, he is as it were cast down and hidden.

For this cause, on the contrary, when God has maintained the cause of his Church, destroying its enemies, David says he has ascended. But St. Paul shows that this was accomplished in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that for a time his majesty had been obscured, and without any reputation among men. It was necessary, then, he says, that he descends to the depths of the earth, and be despised by men, so that in the end he might be so exalted that he should not only receive simple homage from men, but should also distribute spoils and tribute. For whereas it is said in the Psalm that he took the tributes that belonged to him as to one who had subjected his adversaries, St. Paul says that he has bestowed gifts among men. It seems at first sight that these are contrary things, but they agree very well, since our Lord Jesus was not enriched privately for himself, as he has need of nothing, but it was so as to distribute the spoils to us — as it is also said in the Psalm, that not only those who fought would have their portion of the spoil, but also the women who had not stirred from the house. For indeed

we feel how God, by the death and passion of his only Son, has filled us with his goods — not that there was any virtue or industry in us, for we are less than women who spin at their distaffs while others are in combat. When, then, it is said in this passage that God will give to Jesus Christ the spoils of his enemies whom he has conquered, however strong and mighty they might be, this is not merely for his own person, but is so that we may know that the devil now has no right nor claim upon us, since we are made partakers of the death and passion of the Son of God — which we obtain by means of the Gospel. Let us, then, be subject to our Lord Jesus Christ, let us acknowledge him as our King, and let this be done without feint; there is no doubt that we shall obtain from him, firstly, liberty; and then the goods that are necessary to us, and of which we are needy, unless we receive them from his hand. Now let us consider whether, if Satan were not despoiled, how miserable we would be, for he possesses us, he enjoys us peaceably — as our Lord Jesus himself pronounces it; in short, we are as it were his own possession and domain.

Thus, we have need that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ should produce its fruit in us, and that, our enemies being conquered, they should at the same time be cast out — that Jesus Christ should hold as it were his foot upon their throat, so that they can do nothing, however much they scheme to do us any harm. It is notably spoken here of the strong and mighty, so that we should not be dismayed by the strength, the munitions, and all the equipment of our enemies; for it is enough to frighten us when we look on the one hand at our own weakness, and know that the devil is like a roaring lion, that sin has all dominion over us. This, I say, would indeed be enough to dismay us, were it not that we have this testimony — that there is no power, no fortress, nothing at all that hinders our Lord Jesus

from having the spoil of all his enemies, from driving them out and depriving them so fully of what they had that even what was to our loss is turned to our profit. And this is understood not only of Satan, the chief of the wicked, but also of all our adversaries — as we see that as many unbelievers as there are, so many are enemies to us, who are as it were enraged against us; in short, we see the whole world against us. What would it be, if Jesus Christ could not surmount all the mighty and the strong?

Thus, firstly, what we must retain from this passage is that Jesus Christ, having ascended, not only held our enemies bound as captives, but also took all their spoil; and we have received the gifts made to him in homage — indeed so that we might be enriched by his liberality, since there is in us nothing but poverty and neediness. Now it is notably said, “because he poured out his soul unto death.” In this again Isaiah expresses that our Lord Jesus offered himself of his own free will, for this word “pour out” signifies that he did not spare himself, that it was not done with reluctance. For he who gives of his strength, though he releases his hand in the end, this does not mean he always shows some stinginess in it; but he who pours out shows that he does so with a free heart. Thus, we are shown that our Lord Jesus was so inflamed with that love he bore us, that his life flowed away like water; that he made a voluntary sacrifice, to show that he asked nothing but to reconcile us to God his Father. And this is always to confirm us the better, so that, coming to him, we might not doubt that we shall be received with all humanity. For how would it be possible that he should reject us in such a way that we would be as it were cut off from him, seeing that he thus threw himself as it were headlong for us, and poured out his life? Hearing this, then, we have occasion to come more freely to him, and to be assured

that today he will make this sacrifice, which he so freely offered to God his Father, prevail — because of the infinite love he bore us.

Furthermore, since the fruit of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus is perpetual, let us know that today we are enriched as much as is needed, as indeed we experience; for our Lord Jesus must indeed succour us in the many necessities that surround us. For what would we do otherwise, if he did not always have his hand to sustain us? It would surely be impossible to survive; but he gives us what is needed to remedy all our neediness. And indeed all the graces of the Holy Spirit are a part of the spoil of our Lord Jesus Christ, for God his Father has enriched him with them, since we were as it were deprived of them, and the devil hindered the power of the Holy Spirit from having its course among men; now we are enriched by it, since all hindrances are removed, and even (as I have already said) what is contrary in this world is turned to our profit and salvation, since our Lord Jesus has despoiled all our enemies.

Now it is notably said that this was because he was reckoned among sinners, and that he bore the iniquity of many and made intercession for the transgressors. We have already seen how our Lord Jesus bore the transgressions of many — that is, that he sustained the punishment that was altogether unbearable for us; and we were also too fragile to stand before God, if we had been charged with our sins, for no means of acquitting ourselves of it could be found in the whole world. It was necessary, then, that our Lord Jesus, to give us relief, should present himself in our place, and be charged with all our offences — indeed, that they should be imputed to him before God his Father, and that he should be held and bound to make the payment of them. When a man merely owes what he cannot pay, he is as it were bowed down; he does not know what to do, he has as it were a

burden that breaks him and makes his shoulders bend — and what shall it be when we are debtors, not to a mortal creature, but to the living God? And when it is not a matter of gold or silver, but of our offences, which deserve his dreadful wrath, as Scripture shows? Behold, then, the judgment of eternal death prepared for us all, until our Lord Jesus has discharged us of it. And indeed, how shall we suffice for this, unless he who has a victorious power above all things should come and place himself in our stead and supply our deficiencies?

Behold, then, how our Lord Jesus bore the sins and iniquities of many. It is true that this word “many” often carries the same weight as “all.” And indeed, our Lord Jesus was presented to the whole world, for it is not spoken of three or four when it is said, “God so loved the world that he spared not his only Son.” But meanwhile we must note what the Gospel adds in that passage: “so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Behold, then, how our Lord Jesus suffered for us all, and there is neither great nor small who is not today inexcusable, since we may obtain salvation in him. Unbelievers who turn away and deprive themselves of it by their malice are today doubly guilty. For what pretext will they have to excuse their ingratitude for not receiving the good of which they might have been partakers by faith? Let us learn, then, that if we come in a great crowd to our Lord Jesus Christ, the one shall not hinder the other, but he will suffice for each of us. If it were a matter of finding relief in a mortal man — if one asked, “I pray you to carry such a burden,” and if a second came, or if a hundred were to gather together, however great his desire to relieve one and the other, he would nevertheless have to bend his shoulders, for he does not have the power to bear all that might be laid upon him. Likewise, if it were a matter of borrowing, when we are hungry and

thirsty, if we come and ask someone to give us food and drink, perhaps he can well do so for a dozen; but if so great a crowd comes that all the provisions run out, behold how he will be found wanting. Thus among men we need to receive help and relief from many, when we come thus in a great multitude; but when we come to Jesus Christ, we need not fear that his power will fail, and that when each has had his portion, anything will be diminished in him, so that others will not always find enough there. For the more people there are who come to him, the richer we shall find him to succour our neediness. Thus, we must note that it is not without cause the Prophet says he bore the sins of many — namely, so that we should not envy our neighbours, as if we were deprived because we were not succoured, on account of there being too many others there. Behold, in sum, what we must retain from this passage.

Furthermore, it is said that this is because Jesus Christ was reckoned among the transgressors. Here we must note first that he had to be hanged between two thieves, to suffer all the condemnation we had deserved, and so that we might have a still more certain and infallible pledge that today we are absolved before God the Father of all our sins and offences. And this is why St. Mark cites this testimony of the Prophet, when he says that two thieves were hanged with our Lord Jesus Christ — to show that he had to be held as detestable, and so that one might see, as it were with the eye, how he was placed in that rank with every ignominy, so that today we might be exempted from the wrath of God, and from the punishment of the misdeeds we had deserved; and so that, whereas we were plunged even to the depths of hell, we might now be joined with the Angels of paradise, who are wholly devoted to the service of God and accomplish all righteousness. We have, then, all this good, since our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to take our

place, and came to place himself among the malefactors, so as to have every reputation of ignominy among men.

Behold, then, how the reproach of our Lord Jesus Christ lifts us on high, so that we might be exempted from all condemnation, and that sin might no longer be imputed to us. In what does our salvation lie, save that our sins be covered and abolished? Now we cannot obtain this by any other means, save in that the Son of God is our redemption, as St. Paul speaks of it — that is, that he was the price and the payment of what we owed, so that now we might be quit and absolved. Thus, it is not without cause that the Prophet joins these two things together, and always shows us, as before, that we have reason to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, in that he exposed himself to all reproach, seeing the fruit we receive from it. For if our Lord Jesus Christ had done this merely to show a sign of humility, this would be too thin a thing; but it is so that we might find in him what we lack, and that it might be the remedy for what might burden us. When, then, we are thus reconciled to God, and obtain righteousness, and the remission of our sins is fully assured to us, behold how we no longer have any horror of coming to our Lord Jesus Christ, however much his having been crucified carries with it, at first sight, some shame according to the world; but we see that he did not fail to make his triumphs over Satan and over sin — indeed, so fully, that he has acquired righteousness for us, and has effaced the bond that stood against us, in such a way that now we may come to God with sure testimony that we are righteous; we may with full mouth glory in this, whereas before we had to submit to condemnation with all horror. Behold, in sum, what the Prophet has again meant to say to us.

After all these things he adds that he made intercession for the transgressors. This is notably added to show that Jesus Christ, in his death

and passion, held the office of Priest — and without this, too, we would not have all that is required for the assurance of our salvation. It is true that, since the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is the sacrifice by which our sins are effaced, that his blood is our washing, that his obedience serves to abolish all our rebellions and to acquire righteousness for us — in this we have occasion to rejoice. But this is not the whole; for it is said that in calling upon the name of God we shall be saved. But how could we have access to God? What boldness would it be for us to come and pray to him, indeed to cry out to him with full mouth as our Father? Would it not be too great a presumption on our part thus to come intimately to God, and to boast of being his children, unless we had someone to carry the word for us? And where shall we find an advocate or attorney who can do so much for us, until we come to Jesus Christ? Behold, then, what the Prophet meant to add as the conclusion of what he treats — namely, that Jesus Christ made intercession for the transgressors.

Now it is true that on the cross he indeed asked pardon and grace of God his Father even for those who had persecuted him. “Father, forgive them” (he says), “for they know not what they do.” Behold a prayer that our Lord Jesus made for the transgressors, and for those who were his enemies, who had treated him so cruelly, and by whose hand he was crucified; but the Prophet did not speak here only of this particular prayer — rather he wished to declare the Priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Meanwhile let us note well that it is not without cause that he speaks here of the transgressors. Above it was said that he bore the sin of the people of God and suffered for the iniquities of many; but now the Prophet attributes another title to those for whom Jesus Christ prayed, and names them transgressors. When he spoke of the people of God, it was to show that those thought the most

righteous and most excellent have need of the remission of their sins, and cannot find it except in that Jesus Christ poured out his blood to cleanse and wash them. Behold, then, for one point: if we wish to be of the Church, and to be acknowledged of the flock of God, we must know that this is because Jesus Christ is our Redeemer; and let us not fear to come in great number, but rather let each draw his neighbours to it, since he is sufficient to save us all.

Furthermore, it is said here that we are transgressors, so that we may well think on our sins; for we know the audacity and rashness that is in men, so that very often we shall show more shame and modesty when we ask something of a mortal man than we shall show before God. Now the Prophet here brings down all this pride and haughtiness, when he names us transgressors — as if he said: Wretched people, who are you to presume to invoke God, and to call him your Father? Whence comes this dignity to you? Who will dare undertake to come into the presence of the majesty of God, to say, “I am one of thy children”? Go (he says), hide yourselves, for you are all malefactors, and, coming before God, you come as before your Judge, and you must tremble and be utterly confounded. But there is one remedy that can put you in safety — that in calling upon the name of God you should have an invincible fortress in the power and intercession of the Mediator. And without this there is no hope of salvation; you are all lost in your sins. Know, then, the necessity you have that the Son of God be in the midst, that he intercede for you, and perform the office of Priest. This is notably why the Prophet has called us all here transgressors and sinners — namely, so that we might know that the door is shut to us, and that we are not worthy to approach God, but that we are all overwhelmed and confounded unless we have our whole refuge there; for without this remedy

we must perish and rot in our poverties and miseries. Now when we are thus humbled, then we can come to our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that it is he who carries the word in our name, and that it is by him also that we can freely call ourselves children of God. When, then, we come to pray and say, “Our Father who art in heaven,” we must recognise that we have polluted mouths, as concerns ourselves, and that we are not worthy even to call God our Creator, still less should we have this presumption of holding ourselves to be his children. But it is so that our Lord Jesus Christ carries the word for us, and that our prayers and orisons are sanctified by him — as it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the last chapter, that it is by him that we render to God the sacrifices of praise and all prayers, and that he is our Mediator, and that today in his Name we invoke God our Father. Therefore, we can freely glory that he will hold us as his children. Behold how we must practice this passage.

Now we see how our Lord Jesus verified this, praying for his own, as is recounted in the seventeenth chapter of St. John: “Holy Father, behold those thou hast given me: now I depart from the world. I have kept them, and none of them is lost except the son of perdition; but those whom thou hast committed to my charge, I have preserved. Now I pray for them, and not for them only, but for all those who shall believe in me through their word. I pray not for the world, but for those thou hast given me, that thou wouldst bless them and sanctify them, so that they may be one with us.” When we see the Son of God pray — indeed that he, who is the eternal God, should abase himself to the point of being as it were a suppliant, and of presenting a request before God his Father in our name — must we not here recognise an infinite goodness? And firstly we must always retain what has been said — namely, that we would only be profaning the name of God by invoking

it, unless it be in the name of Jesus Christ. And why? Our mouths are polluted and infected — indeed, we are full of corruption; there is nothing but vermin in us; but since our Lord Jesus has abased himself to this condition of supplicating, and of being there in our person to entreat God his Father, we must be founded and grounded upon this when it is a question of founding our prayers today. It is true that just as Isaiah says that Jesus Christ prayed for the transgressors, so too he himself protests that he does not pray for the whole world, for those who take pleasure in their iniquities and remain there in obstinacy — for these are cut off from this benefit and privilege, which is reserved only for the children of God. If, then, we remain in the world, and are separated from our Lord Jesus Christ, it is certain that what he prayed to God his Father does not belong to us, and can profit us nothing; but let us hear what he says: “Behold, I have declared unto them thy Word, and they have believed. I pray for them, and not for them only” (that is, for the disciples), “but for those who shall believe on their doctrine.”

Thus, today let us know that we are associated with the disciples and Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that this prayer he made once will today serve us, and will give us entry to all our prayers, provided that we receive the doctrine of the Gospel in obedience of faith. Thus, we need no longer be in doubt as to how we should frame our petitions; for since we know that Jesus Christ has prayed, we need no longer say, “And how shall we be assured that the power of that prayer reaches us?” Let us believe the Gospel, and we shall follow the Apostles and disciples, and be joined with them. Do we wish to give the lie to the Son of God, who is the eternal and unchangeable truth? Now he has pronounced with his own mouth that all those who receive the doctrine of the Gospel are joined to this prayer, and

that he has included them in it. Since this is so, then, though on the one hand we are poor malefactors, and thus unworthy to approach God, nevertheless by means of the Gospel, when we embrace in faith the promises contained in it, then we shall be presented to God, so that not only will we be pleasing to him, since his only Son has interceded for us, but also so that today we may invoke him as well, and be companions of Jesus Christ in this — as he says, “Behold me, and the servants thou hast given me.” He presents himself there first (as was declared in the eighth chapter), and then brings all his company: “And those thou hast given me,” he says. Now he says he is there ready for the service of God his Father with all those given to him. Thus, there is no doubt that we are joined in this prayer, and in all the praises of God, and that Jesus intones, so to speak, and is like the first singer, who leads us when we pray, so that by his means there is one voice so joined together that the melody is well in accord. Were we to be in accord with the Angels of paradise in praying to God, this would already be too excellent a privilege; but when the Son of God deigns to have such intimacy with us, saying, “Come, I will lead you, I will carry the word for you” — should we not be utterly ravished by this?

Furthermore, this was prefigured under the Law, when the High Priest not only offered sacrifices to God, but also joined prayers to them. Under the ancient shadows, then, there was the Priest, who could not intercede before God nor be received as agreeable without the shedding of blood; but with the blood he also joined prayers, so that the sins of the people might be forgiven, and so that God might receive in mercy those who deserved to be rejected. Behold Jesus Christ, who has put an end to all the figures of the Law, who willed to fulfil this in his own person. It is that he presented the blood for the washing of our sins — not the blood of calves or of lambs as

under the Law, but his sacred blood, indeed, which was consecrated by the Holy Spirit, so that we might have full holiness in it. But with the shedding of blood, he also joined prayers. And this is why today he is called our Mediator, and it is said that he intercedes for us. And when St. Paul speaks of prayers, he adds that there is one God, and one Mediator, who is man, namely the Lord Jesus. He could well have said, “There is one God; there is Jesus Christ who is the eternal Word of God, of one and the same essence, of one and the same glory and majesty.” But he does not use this language; rather he says, “There is one God”; and then, “There is one Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, man” — as if he said: Behold the Son of God, who, after having clothed himself with our nature, after having made himself man like us, sin excepted, now intercedes for us.

Now the ancient priests needed to pray for themselves (and they did so), and then for the sins of the whole people, and they were included in that number. But our Lord Jesus is exempt from that necessity, as far as concerns himself; he need not ask pardon on his own account for offences he has committed, but he intercedes for us. And therefore, in the eighth chapter of Romans, when St. Paul wishes to give us boldness to come to God, he says notably, “And who shall be against us?” However many enemies we may have, we need not be dismayed; for to whom must we render account of our life? Who is our judge? Jesus Christ — and that very one is our advocate, who intercedes for us, and who is there to make peace between God and us. It is he who will make us find grace. Thus, we may boldly lift up our heads, and present ourselves before God — indeed come with all boldness before his judgment-seat, since we have Jesus Christ there in the midst. Behold, then, in sum what we must retain when intercession is spoken of here. In short, every time we are preached the death of our Lord

Jesus Christ, let us at the same time join the prayer he made — and he made it once, so that it might remain forever, and produce its power; for today our Lord Jesus need not kneel again before God his Father to supplicate — it is said he will always be our Intercessor. But how? By virtue of his death and passion, by virtue of the prayer he made — that prayer he makes today. Thus, by virtue of that, we are heard as if he were still speaking today on our behalf; and also (as I have said) all our prayers are dedicated in him, for without this they would be profane.

And indeed also, whenever the faithful prepare themselves to pray to God, they ought (whereas the Papists take a sprinkler of holy water, and perform their charms and sorceries, or their trifles) to feel that their prayers are sprinkled with the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as to be pure and clean, and to be received by God as a sacrifice of sweet savour. And upon this let us recognise that our Lord Jesus Christ was not Priest only for a day, but that he still retains this office today, and shall have it forever, and that we shall always feel its fruit. Now if this had been well known, men would not have gone astray (as has happened) into so many superstitions and vile practices. As we see, the Papists today are like poor wandering beasts, who do not know what road or path they ought to keep in praying to God. They have an infinite number of patrons and advocates, and each forges his own. It is true they will have many in common, but even after all their litanies (as they call them) each will have his devotion to some saint of his own invention. Behold how Jesus Christ is stripped of his honour. And there is no doubt that when they were not content with Jesus Christ, it was the devil who possessed them, and put them into such a rage that, as if out of spite against God, and against what God had pronounced concerning Jesus Christ in giving him office, they gave to this one and that one the right that

belonged to him. As today the Virgin Mary is named advocate by the Papists. To the devil with all their prayers! For it is as if they renounced God and our Lord Jesus Christ. And it will even happen that the Virgin Mary herself must cry out for vengeance against them, because they have made a detestable idol, and have snatched from Jesus Christ the dignity of this priesthood — which has been ratified by the solemn oath of God — and have wished to falsify all holy Scripture. The Papists think the Virgin Mary will help them, but she will have to demand (as I have said) vengeance against them for the injury they have done her; for if they spat in her face and spoke every insult against her, they could not do her a greater reproach than when they call her Advocate. And why? Because it is said that Jesus Christ is established Priest by God his Father. And how? With a solemn oath: “I have sworn” (he says), “and will not repent of it.”

Behold, then, upon what we must be founded — namely, upon the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, since (as St. Paul says in the third chapter of Ephesians) we can approach God, and present ourselves to him, when we are led there by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is (as we have said) there to make us find grace. Now what do the Papists wish to do? They wish to annihilate the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ; they wish it to be null. And when they come with such diabolical audacity to overturn the immutable decree of God, how can they hope to be heard? Thus, let us conclude that in the Papacy this whole doctrine has been buried. And why? I know well they will allege that we are not worthy to come before God. It is true; and who doubts it? But meanwhile let us consider where we must seek our worthiness. Is it not in Jesus Christ alone? And they will have their recourse to the Virgin Mary, and to St. Michael, to the Apostles; and then they will have their saints, whom they have forged, who either never existed

in the world, or who have been canonised at the whim of the Pope — indeed, though they be in the depths of hell — behold their patrons and advocates. But even granting the Papists this — that their Saints, who never existed, or who were but half-devils and phantoms, were Apostles and Martyrs, and lived as holily as it is possible to live — did they not, nevertheless, also have as much need of an advocate as others? It is certain that the Virgin Mary could not find grace before God without the Head; she needed Jesus Christ to be her Redeemer, just as he was ours. The Apostles and Martyrs, the Patriarchs and Prophets, also had the same necessity of having recourse to this Redeemer, common to all. And what will it be, then, when we come to seek them out?

Thus, since the Apostles have referred us to Jesus Christ, and have declared to us that it is there we must direct ourselves — since he also invites us so sweetly, saying, “Come unto me” — let us not draw back, let us not go wandering off, but let us approach freely. For it is not only for the Prophets that he speaks thus, or for the Apostles and Martyrs, or for the Virgin Mary, but he wishes to retain us all to himself, as is also very necessary for us. Let us learn, I say, not to wander here and there when we pray to God, and let us recognise the good he has done us in having been pleased to draw us out of that abyss and confusion of the Papacy, and to show us how the door is opened to us to come to him — namely, since Jesus Christ is our Intercessor. Let us remain there without wandering to one side or the other. For it is certain that if our prayers are not regulated according to the word of God, they are frivolous, and God rejects them; and they can also not be made in faith unless the certainty proceeds from that source — namely, from the truth of God. Now if we wish our prayers to be founded in faith, they must be conformed to the will of God, and we must

follow what he commands us — namely, that we hold Jesus Christ for our Intercessor, Advocate, and Mediator.

Behold, then, the direction he gives us, and the foundation on which we must be established, so that we do not waver like reeds in every wind. And this is also why he says so often, “Whatsoever you shall ask my Father in my name, it shall be given you.” And we see also how the faithful under the Law, although they did not have such clarity as we have today in the Gospel, nevertheless did not fail to put Jesus Christ forward — indeed under the figure that was given them. “Lord,” they said, “look upon the face of thy Christ, and for the love of thine Anointed, hear us.” “O our eternal God, hear us for the sake of the Lord,” says Daniel; and this is repeated so often in the Psalms. It is true that this is spoken of David, but it is because he was a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when Daniel speaks thus, “For the sake of the Lord,” he shows well that it is the Redeemer who had been promised, and whose coming was then at hand. But Jesus Christ speaks more openly, and says, “Until now you have asked nothing of my Father in my name; ask now, and it shall be given you.” As if he said: Until now you have not known that my office is to be Mediator toward God my Father for you; and indeed, he had not yet ascended into heaven, he had not even yet torn the veil of the Temple, to give us entry there. But now we have private access there, since the veil of the Temple is torn, and Jesus Christ has entered, not into a material sanctuary (as the priests of the time of the Law), but even into heaven, into the majesty of God his Father, so as to make us find grace there — so that the throne of God is no longer a throne of majesty to terrify us, but invites us gently and with fatherly goodness, since we come there in the name and by means of this Priest whom he has ordained for us.

Behold, then, how the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ is always profitable to us, and is for us an invincible fortress — so much so that when we come to him we shall be so heard that we shall feel by experience that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And although this statement of the Prophet Joel was spoken before Jesus Christ had appeared, nevertheless the faithful of the time of the Law practiced it so well that we, too, ought to be confirmed and assured by their example — we, I say, who have the perfection and fulfilment of all that was figured under the Law — that when we come to pray and to invoke our God in the name of him whom he has established for us as Advocate, we shall feel in truth that he always intercedes for us, so that we may be heard in all our petitions.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgment of our faults, praying to him, etc.