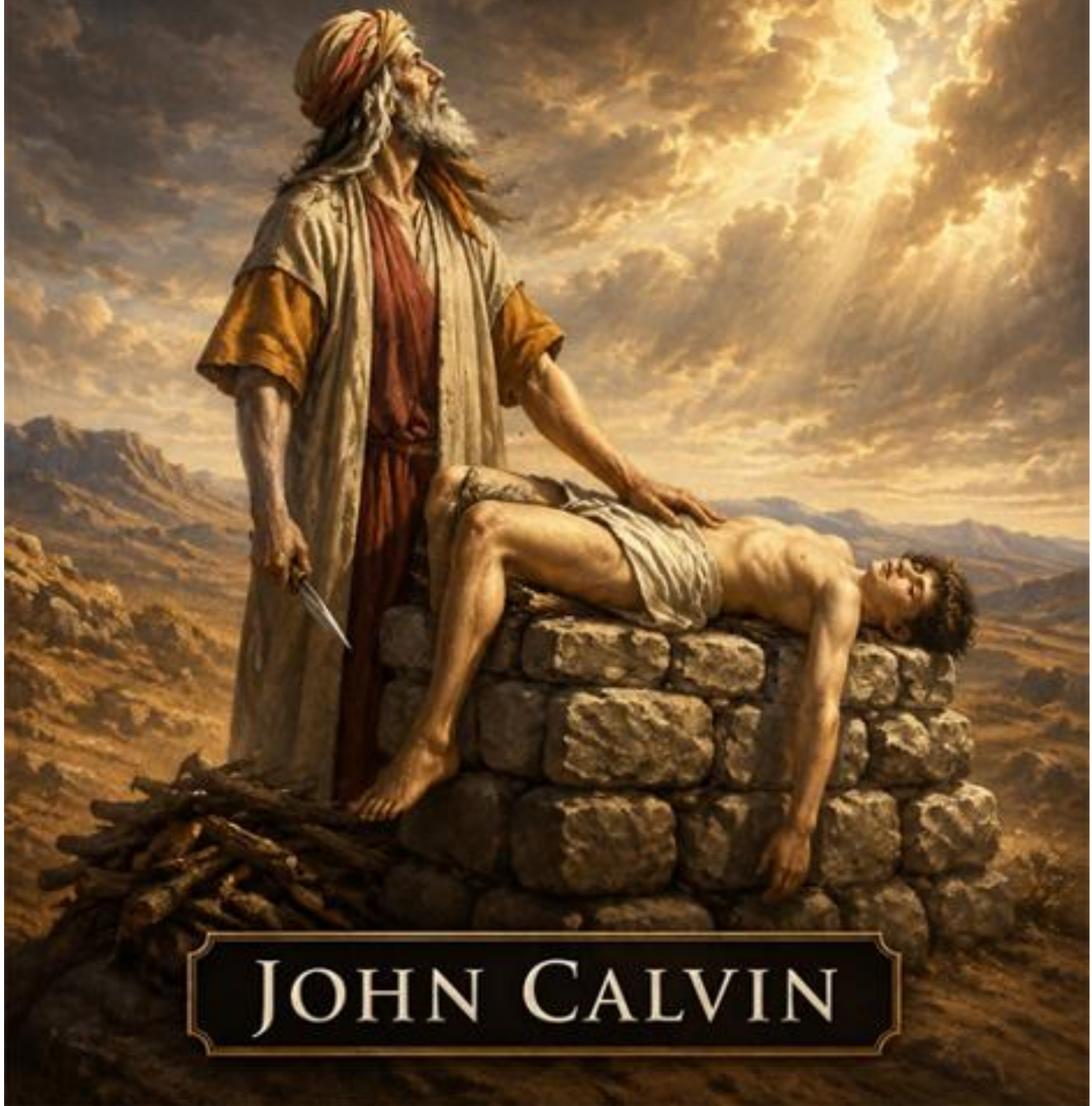


MONERGISM EBOOK

THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM



JOHN CALVIN

THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM

JOHN CALVIN

Monergism Books

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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EDITOR'S NOTE

We used Claude to generate a translation of these three sermons by John Calvin from the French original. The original title has been shortened to *The Sacrifice of Abraham*.

ORIGINAL TITLE PAGE

THREE SERMONS ON THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM. By Mr. John
Calvin.

At the beginning and at the end of the first of these sermons are inserted the prayers which the Author was accustomed to make in his ordinary sermons.

Hebrews 11:17 — “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son.”

These three sermons were preached by the Author on the passage contained in Genesis from chapter 21, verse 33, to verse 15 of the following chapter

22.

“I came not to send peace, but a sword.” — Matthew 10

With Privilege. Geneva. 1561.

TO THE CHRISTIAN READER

When we read of the deeds of Abraham, dear reader, we must always call to mind that he is not to be reckoned as an ordinary man among the faithful, but as the common father of us all, so that all should conform themselves to him (Rom. 4:16). Now among the other deeds worthy to be imitated, from which we may draw plain lessons of faith and obedience, none could be found more excellent or more memorable than the sacrifice of his son — an act by which he was tested in earnest, not only in these two respects but in every sense, as by a final trial; even as the Apostle to the Hebrews shows, that this trial ought to be reckoned above all others that had gone before it, and that it summed up and crowned all the rest that he had previously undergone. But to know better how great this trial was, we must carefully weigh the circumstances noted in the account which Moses gives in his Genesis — circumstances so skilfully drawn out and so ingeniously set before our eyes by our faithful minister, Mr. John Calvin, in treating this passage in his ordinary sermons, that I thought it would be a welcome thing to share with you what those who heard them preached have

gathered from them, so that you might take from them something of the same savour felt by those who were touched and moved by his living voice.

And besides, they will serve you, so that you may learn to stand fast and unmoved when you yourself are brought to such a trial. It is true that God does not test the faith of all of us with such severity; nevertheless, he has willed to give us an example in the person of our father Abraham, by which he calls us all to the common trial of our faith, which he will not allow to lie idle. Moreover, just as Abraham showed that he feared God by not sparing his own son, so of all the faithful a like testimony of their faith is required, in that they too must renounce themselves. But let this be noted here only in passing, referring you for fuller instruction to a diligent reading and constant meditation upon these sermons. Now I pray our good God, that it would please him, by his grace, so to bless this small labour that it may not remain fruitless. Farewell.

THE AUTHOR'S CUSTOMARY PRAYER AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS SERMONS DURING THE WEEK

We shall call upon our good God, praying that it may please him to cast the eye of his fatherly mercy upon us, his poor servants — not imputing to us so many faults and offences by which we cease not, day after day, to provoke his anger against us. And forasmuch as we are far too unworthy to appear before his holy Majesty, may it please him to receive us in the name of his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, accepting the merit of his death and passion as recompense for all our faults, since in our own works we can find nothing on which to stand before his face. And may it please him to enlighten us by his Holy Spirit unto the true understanding of his holy Word, granting us grace to handle it faithfully, to receive it in true fear and humility, and to be so instructed by it that we place our confidence fully in him, so as to serve and honour him as is fitting, to glorify his holy Name throughout our whole life, and to edify our neighbours by good example. We shall ask all these things of him, even as our good Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ has taught us to pray, saying, Our Father, which art in heaven, etc.

This following prayer is likewise said by the Author after the Psalm has been sung, both on Sunday and on Wednesday, the day of prayers

We shall call upon our good God and Father, beseeching him that, since all fullness of wisdom and light dwells in him, it may please him to enlighten us by his Holy Spirit unto the true understanding of his Word, granting us grace to receive it in true fear and humility, that we may be taught by it to place our confidence in him alone, to serve and honour him as is fitting, to glorify his holy Name throughout our whole life, and to edify our neighbours by good example — rendering to him the love and reverence which faithful servants and children owe to their masters and fathers, seeing that it has pleased him to grant us this grace, to receive us into the number of his servants and children. And we shall pray thus, even as our good Master has taught us: Our Father, which art in heaven, etc.

THE FIRST SERMON

Preached on Saturday, the first day of June, 1560

Genesis, chapter 21, at the end

Now Abraham planted a grove there, and called upon the name of the Eternal, the everlasting God, and dwelt as a stranger in the land of the Philistines many days.

Chapter 22

And it came to pass after these things that God tempted Abraham and said unto him, Abraham. And he answered, Here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, yea thine only son, whom thou singularly lovest, even Isaac, and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

We saw yesterday how Abraham, in order to discharge his duty toward the king of Gerar, had offered him tribute. Now Moses adds further that, being now at rest, he solemnly called upon the name of God. We must therefore keep in mind, in sum, that Abraham willingly submitted

himself to the one who held authority over that country: he did not wait to be forced or compelled to render the duty of a good and loyal subject, but did so without being asked. Yet at the same time we see, on the other hand, that this did not keep him from doing homage to God. And however odious a thing it might seem (as we have shown above) to hold a religion apart from, and separate from, that of those among whom he lived, he was nonetheless never willing to fail to make confession of his faith as God had commanded him. Thus we see that, both toward God and toward men, he conducted himself in such a way that he can be for us an example of true humility, teaching us how we ought to render submission to those to whom we owe it — while nevertheless God retains his sovereign dominion over all, and however much authority and pre-eminence men may have, this in no way detracts from the heavenly majesty, which ought to eclipse all human loftiness.

It is quite certain that if Abraham had wished to curry favour with his neighbours, he would have conformed himself to their ways, and would not have declared that he had a God whom he wished to worship, renouncing all the idolatries which then held sway and infected and polluted the whole earth. But whatever the case, he professes that he wishes to serve and worship God in purity. And for this reason, he has his altar, as we have seen, at which he pays solemn homage to God, and by this means renounces all the vices and corruptions found among his neighbours — as though he were condemning them, and showing that there is but one true service acceptable to God, just as there is but one living God, and that all the rest is nothing but false imagination and deceit. Although he had previously had no fixed abode, and had been driven here and there, he nevertheless never failed to

call upon God wherever he went — that is, to show that he did not conform to all the errors which were then in fashion.

But here he has a special reason for calling upon God once more in this place, because he had more rest and comfort than before. For he had never dared to plant a tree, and now he plants several, seeing that he is permitted to remain there. And just as he does homage to the earthly king to whom the land belonged, he wishes also to show that he has not forgotten God, that he has not cooled the zeal he bore toward him, that he still holds him always as his sovereign Prince, humbles himself under him, and desires to remain in his protection. This, then, is why Moses expressly records that Abraham called upon the Name of the Lord. The law of dedicating houses was not yet written, but he did not fail to observe it — that is, he showed in effect that the place of his dwelling was a temple of God, just as every believer ought to think of keeping his house pure and clean from all pollution. It is true that today we no longer have this ceremony which God commanded the Jews, namely, that they should dedicate their houses before living in them; but the substance remains, and the end which God had in view — namely, that when we are lodged, it should not be a hiding-place shutting out the presence of God, that we should not permit ourselves license to walk according to our own appetites, but that, inasmuch as God has done us the good of giving us a house, we should — even if it be but a small corner of retreat — see that it is honoured there, and that the place be dedicated to his service. Now this is not a matter of walls and roof, but of the household: that is, that we be wholly his, and that we make an offering to him of our bodies and our souls, and take pains that everyone in the household conform to the same, and follow suit.

Now the father of a family ought to begin with his own person, yet he must also instruct his wife. If God has given him children or servants, let all of this be kept in the obedience of God. Such, then, is the way to dedicate houses, and consequently to call upon the Name of the Lord, as is here said of Abraham. Now this is a thing badly practiced today. For we see that everyone wishes to serve God after his own fashion, and meanwhile God counts for almost nothing. If masters and mistresses wring from their servants' labour for their own profit and convenience, they are content with that. If God is blasphemed there, if he is despised there, if the household is profaned, so that there is neither zeal nor religion in it, that passes by and is let go. Yet it is certain that God will not thus forgo his right. Let us learn, then, to make such use of the houses in which we are lodged, that God may dwell there as our sovereign, and that small and great alike may be dedicated to him, and offer themselves to him not only in soul but also in body — even those who, for danger to their life, cannot openly honour God, are not for that excused, for the honour we owe him is too precious a thing.

Nor must it be alleged that it is not permitted us, and that we do not have the liberty. For whatever the case, what is here recorded of Abraham ought to serve us for instruction. For we know that he is the pattern of all the faithful, inasmuch as he is their father. Since this is so, then, even though we should find ourselves mingled among the enemies of God and of his truth, and persecution were imminent, we ought to make confession of our faith. For we must always prefer that which is chief above all else besides. This, then, is what we have to retain from this passage.

Now it is especially to be noted that he calls upon the Name of the Eternal — that is, the God of the age, the God of ever. Here Moses makes, as it were, a comparison of the changes and revolutions through which Abraham

had passed, and of the firmness that he had in his faith, and of the constancy and steadfastness never to waver, whatever might come. Behold, then, Abraham, who has been driven this way and that: he has changed his dwelling, he has even been tossed about like straw before the wind. Yet for all that, he knew that he must remain firm in God, and that his faith was so well founded that nothing could shake it, and that there was in his own person no variableness at all. Thus, we see how Abraham has always followed the course to which God had brought him. And so he worships the eternal God, the God of the ages — even though it might seem that God played with him as with a ball, tossing him here and there.

Now it is also said that he sojourned in this country of the Philistines a long space of time; but the word Moses uses signifies to dwell as a stranger. And this too is well worth noting. For although he had permission to dwell there, and to live peaceably, and although the extortions and violence he had suffered were no longer inflicted upon him, yet he knew that he was not yet the possessor of that land. It is true that it had been given to him, and God had even then already ratified this gift several times. And yet it had been said to him, “Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land not theirs four hundred years” (Gen. 15:13). So Abraham must therefore practice this teaching continually — namely, that though he has rest, he is nevertheless there only as a stranger by sufferance, and that he must always have, as it were, one foot lifted: in short, that he must be like a bird upon the branch, as the saying goes. And this is precisely why he did homage to the king of Gerar. For he does not thereby renounce the gift that had been made to him by God; but because the time was not yet come to enjoy it and to enter into possession, he is content meanwhile to be a stranger there.

And this is why also, as we shall see further on, he will purchase the burial-place for his wife — showing all the more that he was not yet possessor even of a single foot of ground, and yet did not fail, by faith, to have received what had been given him. Thus we see that his hope extended beyond this present life. And meanwhile we see that it is not without cause that he says in the Psalm that God has been the dwelling-place of every generation to those who trust in him (Ps. 90). For Abraham was exposed both to wind and to rain and to every storm, dwelling among barbarous peoples full of cruelty; and yet God gave him shelter — yes, and this to such a degree that he preferred to leave the land and lift up his heart on high, rather than seek means to acquire lands and inheritances. He thus passed through this world in such a way that he never settled down in it. And so, in the end, God showed the fulfilment of this promise — not that Abraham saw it accomplished in his own lifetime, but, as we have said, his hope stretched further; and so we may say with the Apostle that he built no nest in this world, and had no fixed goal here (Heb. 11:13). For he might have returned to the country from which he had come, namely to the land of his birth, that is, to Chaldea; but he restrained himself there where he possessed nothing, where he had neither kinsfolk nor friends. Thus, we see that he looked higher than to this world.

Now if this had not been in him a doctrine so clear as we have it today by comparison — what excuse will there be, when our Lord Jesus Christ has once appeared, has conversed in this world, and then entered into the heavenly kingdom, and has opened to us the door there, and continually by his Gospel urges us to aspire on high? If we, I say, remain always wrapped up in these corruptible things, must not this ingratitude be all the more shameful? Let us learn, then, to be so lodged in this world, that we may

enjoy the goods which God gives us here, while nevertheless professing with Saint Paul that our dwelling is truly in heaven, and that we are already citizens there, if only by hope (Phil. 3:20). And indeed, we ought to remember well what is said elsewhere: that although we are lodged in these mortal bodies, we ought to be, as it were, absent from God (2 Cor. 5:9). And we see clearly that we do not enjoy his presence, since our spiritual life is hidden (Col. 3:3); for otherwise we would enjoy it in fact, and there would be no more room for faith, since what one hopes for (as St. Paul says) is not yet seen (Rom. 8:24). Thus, let us learn that since God, by every means, seeks to draw us to himself, renouncing ourselves, and that the son who has been given to him should be taken away — as though he were saying, “Go, thou hast been nothing to me but a beast, since thou hast attended upon me and followed me, taking such pains to obey me. I promised thee a lineage, from which the salvation of the whole world would come; I have fulfilled my promise to thee in giving thee thy son Isaac: but now thou must go and cut his throat, to teach thee that this was nothing but simplicity and folly on thy part to trust in what I promised thee — that thou wouldst have a lineage, and that this lineage would be more precious than the whole world, yea a hundred thousand worlds. For it is a matter of the eternal salvation of thy soul and of the souls of all men, and now thou art about to erase it all.”

Now (as I have already said) it is impossible for us fully to comprehend these things, and however much we may be touched by them, we must nevertheless meditate upon them, for it is not in vain that they are written. So much, then, for the preface to this history. Now let us proceed to expound point by point what is here set down by Moses: “Take thy son, thine only son, Isaac, thy son whom thou lovest uniquely.” Here we see how God is not content merely to pierce Abraham's heart, as if he dealt him

a single stab with a dagger, but holds him on the rack, as it were, in a manifold torture. It is as if, after having applied the rack to him once, he were to give him yet another kind of torment. For if he had simply commanded him to kill his son, would it not have been enough to say to him, “Go, and sacrifice thy son”? But instead, he says, “Take now thy son, yea thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest uniquely” — to show that all hope was to be cut off from Abraham. Now when it is said “thine only son whom thou lovest,” this was not merely a natural, fatherly love such as fathers commonly have for their children; but it was fitting that Abraham should love Isaac according to the value he placed upon the salvation of his own soul, and of the whole world — to be the companion of angels, and the heir of the whole world, and heir of the Kingdom of God. In sum, then, this is what is meant by the word “only son, and well-beloved.”

And then the name “Isaac” is set down here as if by way of reproach; for God himself had given this name to Isaac, who had had no part in the naming of himself according to men's fancy. It is God who names the child, and how? “Laughter” — that is, matter for joy. Now it seems that God mocks him now, as if to say, “Rejoice in Isaac, and let it seem to thee that there was nothing but matter for rejoicing.” Yet now it behoves thee to have a sorrow that pierces thy heart, that thou thyself be the executioner of this child whom thou lovest so dearly, that thou hold the drawn blade with lifted hand to cut his throat. Now after this, could Abraham not be reckoned a murderer, and by this means stir up the rage of all his neighbours against him, so that they would say, “How could this wretch go and kill his own son! Behold a madman, behold one possessed: must not this rage be more than diabolical?” Behold, then, how before God he has been confounded, and before the world detestable. But this is not yet enough: “Take thy son,”

he says. "And what shall I do with him? Take him, and go and sacrifice him. And whither shall I lead him? Into some mountain that I will tell thee." Now it is required that Abraham thus languish, and, beyond having to kill his son, that he be led by a long way, not knowing where, without any guidance — that God hold him there, not merely with his beak in the water, but in a torment so horrible that it is impossible for us to meditate upon it as we ought.

Are these not things surpassing all human sense? For as previously it had been said to him, on leaving the place of his birth, that he did not know where God would lead him — now the place has at least been assigned to him: "Thou shalt go into the land of Moriah." He must depart from the place where he has lived to such an old age — for we have already seen that he was very old. "Go," God says. "And when thou shalt be come there, then will I declare to thee where I wish thee to sacrifice thy son." Here, then, we see how, in every way, God has so thoroughly tested the heart of his servant that all the trials we could ever gather up would amount to nothing by comparison; and when we have made every comparison, it will be nothing beside all that we may have to endure, in respect of what we see here. We see that God spares our infirmity wonderfully, when he does not bring us thus far. If it is a matter of some sickness we must endure, we will have some regrets, which will make us fret against God. If a husband dies, the wife will be so desolate that there will be nothing but murmuring and impatience. If God takes away someone's child — even though he has several others — there will be nothing but regrets and excessive weeping, to fret oneself over it. And what would it be if God brought us to the point of having to kill our own children? As it is here spoken of — that nothing should remain, and that the whole house should be swept entirely clean?

And even if it were so, that would still be nothing compared with Abraham. For the children God gives us today are not the foundation of our salvation; we shall not for that fail to have our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, even though all human knowledge should perish. But let us acknowledge that God bears with us, having pity on our frailty, when he does not bring us to so severe and rigorous a trial as this, of which Moses here makes mention. Following this, then, let us be advised that if God tests us, we ought to bow the neck, and be content to be proved by him. And this, too, is the chief thing in our whole life: that we allow ourselves to be so mastered that God may dispose of us at his pleasure, and that we should not go about kicking against the goad, to say that he treats us in this way or that. This (I say) is the chief thing in our life.

It is true that it will amount to much when we can walk in integrity with our neighbours, when we do wrong to none, when we are chaste and upright, when we are temperate in our life, when we flee all drunkenness and excess, so that no blasphemy proceeds from our mouth, and other such things. And this indeed is great virtue — yet it is not the thing chiefly required of us, for that lies elsewhere, as I have already said, which is that in serving God, if we are assailed by many troubles, that the devil raises up ambushes for us, that men be so malicious and perverse that one pricks us, another strikes us, and yet another labours to ruin us; and on the other hand, that we drag our wings, that we hunger and thirst, that we are slandered and despised — when all this comes to pass, we must still bless the Name of God, and all our anguish and passions must be soothed, and we must be able to say continually, “Lord, thy will be done” — and that thou dealest with us according as thou wilt; and though it should be far worse, we are

nonetheless quite ready to receive it all. When, therefore, we are thus patient, it is certain that this is the chief thing, toward which we must strive.

And above all, this history ought to be so much the more prized and meditated by us, seeing that our Lord willed to declare what we ought to grasp in the person of our father Abraham, so that we might follow his example. And as I have already said, when God led him there, it was that he and all that he had put into his hand should be dedicated to him. For if Abraham had not had this principle, it is certain that he would never have taken a single step, and he would even have drawn well back at the point of approaching God; but he held this as chief, that he was not his own, and that what God had given him he ought not to use at his own pleasure to retain it, but he kept his account thus: “Here I am” — as also he shows it. For when God calls him, “Abraham” — “Here I am, Lord,” Abraham answers — this answer declares that Abraham was there as one attentive to receive the commandments that God would give him, just as a servant will be watchful. For if his master walks, he will be at his heels, to say, “Does anything please you? If your master rests, he will be there, ready to hear what his master wishes to command him: ‘Do this, go there.’” Thus, then, Abraham shows that he has given himself over neither to himself nor to his own affections, but that he was so wholly dedicated to God that all he possessed was likewise God's. And he does not say this hypocritically, as many will say well with the mouth, “Here I am,” and yet do not fail to withdraw far from God. But when Abraham has said, “Here I am,” he protests thereby that he is here before God — and then further he protests that he has both feet and hands, both eyes and ears, and all his senses, and all the parts of his body and his soul, ready to serve God and to bend under his yoke, and to go wherever he shall be sent.

This, then, is what we have to retain concerning our father Abraham: and thereby we know that without this aim we shall do nothing but err our whole life long, as I have said. We might possess the finest virtues in the world, we might be esteemed as angels — yet all this will be nothing, unless we know that God sees us, and that he wills that we always bend toward him. And meanwhile, even when he causes us to be turned this way and that, and we must labour and grow weary to the utmost, we must not cease continually to hold ourselves in his obedience and submission, saying, “Lord, here I am,” whatever it may be — and that we despise all the obstacles that hinder and may delay us, all the difficulties, troubles, and combats that shall be raised against us; that we despise all this, I say, so that we may always pursue our way, until we shall have come to the goal to which God calls us: that is, that we may be delivered from all our conflicts, to enjoy the heavenly rest.

Then we shall prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God in acknowledgment of our faults, praying him so to make us feel them, that it may cause us to be displeased with ourselves for them, and to strip ourselves more and more that he may overturn and destroy the counsels, machinations, and enterprises of all his adversaries, to the end that his glory may shine forth everywhere, and that the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ may be increased and advanced more and more. We shall pray for all these things, even as our good Master and Lord Jesus Christ has taught us to pray, saying, Our Father, which art in heaven, etc.

We shall likewise pray this good God to grant us steadfast perseverance in his holy faith, to increase it in us day by day, of which we make confession, saying, I believe in God the Father, etc.

The blessing upon the people after the sermon

The grace of God the Father, and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
through the communion of the Holy Spirit, abide with you evermore. Amen.

THE SECOND SERMON

Preached on Monday, the tenth day of June, 1560

Genesis, chapter 22

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and cut the wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went unto the place which God had told him of. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. And he said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder to worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son, and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father. And he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. So they went both of them together.

We have seen that this was the chief and the hardest combat that ever Abraham sustained in the whole of his life — that of going up into the mountain to offer his son as a burnt offering, for it was first required that he slay him with his own hand. Now upon this we have already shown that in our father God has declared to us that we must surmount every affection of nature, to such a degree that his honour must be preferred above all else besides. If a husband loves his wife, a father his children, all this must be trodden underfoot when it is a question of the service of God, for that is too precious a thing. We have also declared that Abraham was tempted not only in that God commanded him to slay his son, but in that it seemed indeed that all the promises he had received were as good as abolished, for they all depended upon this — that we had seen the blessed seed was to be raised up in Isaac. It seems, then, that God meant to frustrate Abraham. Now, however one might judge according to human sense that God contradicts himself, and that this command laid upon him was to break and bring to nothing all that he had heard before, Abraham nevertheless has this constancy — simply to obey God, without inquiring further.

Now at first sight it might seem that what he does is not founded upon true faith, for faith rests upon the promises. Yet, as we have touched upon, Abraham could hope for nothing from God except by means of Isaac; for it is said that in Jesus Christ all the promises of salvation have their firmness, and are ratified so as to be Yea and Amen (2 Cor. 1:20). Our Lord Jesus Christ was to come of the race of Isaac, and it was truly the seed that had been promised to him. How, then, could Abraham reconcile this — that Isaac his son should die, and yet that the promises of God should remain in their full force and execution? Now the Apostle says that Abraham offered up his son by faith. And thus he signifies to us that Abraham, whatever the

case, held fast and stood firm to what God had pronounced to him with his own mouth. And as for the seeming contradiction between this command that was laid upon him and the promises that had been given him, here is how the Apostle replies: that Abraham believed that God was able enough to raise up seed even from the ashes of Isaac, once his body had been wholly burnt — that he could raise up again this seed that had been promised to him.

Now this is an article that will be profitable to us, provided we understand it well; for we are hereby admonished to believe in God to such a degree that we surmount the world, and all that we can perceive, and all that we comprehend by our own reason and understanding. For if faith rested upon what we can contemplate, what would that be? The power of God would be too much diminished. And moreover, we must note what is said by the Apostle, that faith is a sight of things invisible, and an assurance of things not present (Heb. 11:1). This answers to what Saint Paul says in the eighth chapter of Romans: that we do not hope for things that are plain and evident to us, but for things that are far removed from us, things that seem even impossible. Since, then, it is so that the promises of God do not bring before our very eyes what they contain, we must (as I have already said) mount above the world when it is a question of believing. And what does that mean? That we should not measure the power of God, which is infinite, by such means as present themselves and as we can comprehend. But when these thoughts come into our fancy — that the thing cannot be done, that there is, as it were, a contradiction — then we must conclude: Be it so or not, God will accomplish what he has said. And how? Oh, it is not for us to judge. Here we must take captive all our senses, and give God this honour, that he is faithful; though we do not know by what means he will find a way

out where it seems to us that everything is closed and stopped up. This, then, is what we are to retain from what is taught us here by the Apostle.

Now if Abraham had argued by human reason, he would have said, God is not contrary to himself: now has he not declared to me that I should have seed in Isaac, and that from thence the Saviour of the world should come? I must hold to that. Now it is commanded me at this hour to kill Isaac: there is no consistency in it, for what I have already received must remain. This is how Abraham might have excused himself, to the point of being rebellious toward God under colour of obeying him. But what does he do? He considers that God is powerful enough to accomplish what he has promised him touching Isaac. And yet, but when he shall be dead, what shall become of it? Yes, as if God were no longer the Lord of death. Behold, then, the true combat of Abraham's faith — that death presents itself before his eyes, and this was to confound him; but he lifts up the power of God higher, and says, God will surmount, even in this very point. And how? Oh, it is not for man to be judge or arbiter here, nor to let loose the rein to his own opinion, nor to measure the power of God; but he must close his eyes, and hold himself there, so as to say, God will find a way in such fashion that I must be astonished at it — but for the present it is not for me to inquire why, nor how he means thus to go about it: I must be as one bound, until God declares to me what was previously unknown to me. And this we shall see presently more clearly in that word with which Abraham answers his son, My son, God will provide. Now we see, then, how we are to honour God when it is a question of accepting his promises, and of holding fast to them, and of making a firm resolve to follow wherever he calls us — that is to say, that we should know that the issues of death are in his hand, as it is said in the Psalm; and when we shall see nothing before us but abysses, and it

shall seem that they must swallow us up, nevertheless we should walk on where God calls us.

It is expressly said that Abraham had saddled his ass, that he had laid the wood upon it together with the provisions, and that he set out with two servants and his son. Here Moses specifies more particularly what has already been touched upon above — namely, that God tested Abraham's faith to the very end, holding him thus in suspense. It would have been enough that Abraham should cut the wood, and that he should march forth carrying only some bowshot's distance to kill his son; but he must set out on the way, not knowing where he is to go, and then night comes, which always brings with it more vexation and grief. When we already have some sadness and some anxiety, it is certain that the trouble redoubles by night. Now Abraham must endure this too, and be agitated on every side. And well — does he rise early in the morning? It is only to begin all over again. By day he sees his poor son, whom he must presently kill; and always these fantasies return to confront him: How? — that I should be the murderer of my own offspring, and that before God and before men I should commit an act that might be reckoned the most detestable that could be imagined? For it is a monstrous thing, and one to make every man's hair stand on end throughout the world. But be that as it may, Abraham must nevertheless force himself onward, and must remain a second night, until the third day, when God shows him the mountain of Moriah, which is the place where Jerusalem was afterward built.

This, then, is what we have to retain — namely, that to fight well against every temptation, it is not enough that we have some sudden warmth of faith, but such perseverance that we do not fail, however much God prolongs the combat, and however little deliverance we obtain at the first

stroke. And this is a point altogether necessary; for those who will show a great and singular affection to obey God will often have but gusts of it, which pass quickly away, as we experience only too well. And thus we should find it nothing strange if God does not deliver us at once, when we shall have been assailed by some conflict, and our faith must be tested; if we do not surmount it on the first day, but must continue — let us not think that God goes beyond measure, but rather let us follow the example of our father Abraham in this respect.

Now it is said at the same time that he had commanded his servants to remain there, and that he had laid upon his son Isaac the burden of the wood to make the sacrifice. For it was not merely a matter of killing Isaac, but he must also burn him, and reduce his body to ashes. He therefore loads Isaac with wood, and commands his servants to remain there — for he sees well that his servants would never have permitted such an act; rather they would have judged him a poor, doting old man carried away by some madness that had seized him. He protests that he has this command from God; but is it possible that God should have commanded so cruel a thing? They would not have failed to take care to judge that such obedience could never have been a service of God, but they would have held him for a man enraged and out of his senses. Abraham knew this, and it is a circumstance we ought carefully to note — namely, that he foresaw the infamy and reproach that would come upon him, and that everyone would think he had done this out of frenzy, and that God would never have held such a service acceptable; and yet, knowing this, it did not trouble him at all — he cared nothing for all the ignominy that was prepared for him among men, in doing a thing that was against nature, and that was a cruelty so enormous and so

detestable as none could be more so, and nevertheless he did not resist at all.

Let us learn from his example that when, in serving God, we shall be reviled by the world, when men spit in our face, and we are condemned instead of being esteemed, we should not cease for that to go always forward. For if we have not such steadfastness, it is certain that we shall be serving our own ambition, and shall be seeking our own wages, as our Lord Jesus Christ says: when men shall have applauded us, and shall find all that we have done good, and we shall be well content to be praised here — let us look for nothing in heaven, for already we shall have looked too much upon the world. But when we shall be able to be patient to this point, that though men turn to evil what we do to obey God, this does not for all that hinder our course nor delay it — thus shall we show in truth that it is God whom we seek to please. In short, if we do not despise all human judgments, and bear patiently all the reproaches, disgraces, and slanders that may be brought against us, it is certain that our faith will not declare itself as it ought.

And this too is why Saint Paul exhorts us, by his own example, to walk through evil report as through good report, and to do well though we be ill spoken of (2 Cor. 6:8) — that is to say, that when we shall have had an upright intention, and God shall bear us witness that we have desired to conform ourselves to his will, though men slander us, and even charge us falsely with crimes, let us be content that God accepts and approves us. Now today we have need of this doctrine as much as ever; for in general, if we make profession of Christianity, we must be esteemed as heretics, as dogs, and the world reckons that we seek nothing but trouble, that we are

rebels, that we have forsaken God, that we are, in short, worse than apostates. Thus do the Papists today speak of us.

Now if we are so delicate, and have ears so ticklish, as we see many have, who wish to be kept in their good reputation, it is certain that here we must all be flattened, and it will seem that God is as good as abandoned. So much the more, then, must we meditate upon this doctrine — namely, that it should not matter to us in what reputation we stand before men, provided that God approves us. Now there is also this in particular: if a man walks in simplicity, one will mock him, another will call him a hypocrite, and yet another will say that he does it all for his own profit. And this is how the devil, by such wiles, seeks to debauch us. We must learn, then, to have all our senses so fixed upon God that though men wrongfully slander us, we should not for all that be turned aside, but should always look to the way that is set before us.

This, too, is what we have to gather — what virtue there was in the faith of Abraham, in that he was so composed, having premeditated these things as if he had been quite at ease. If we have some passion, even though we mean well, how often do we wander, and are so bewildered that we know not where to begin, nor what order to keep. We see this in the very men who are most magnanimous — that even in perplexity they will not go about it so soberly as would be required. Now Abraham needed to have a mind settled amid all the fancies that came before him, which might have said: Behold my servants, who could hinder me in this act, for they will think I am carried out of my wits; I must, instead of binding my son, be bound myself, and they will bring me back home in spite of myself, and hold me there as a wild beast, as though God had utterly condemned me. Abraham foresaw all this. Thus, we may judge by this, that in the midst of these

shadows he was so enlightened by the Spirit of God that he ever had both counsel and discretion, according as he had need of them. Now by his example we are advised, that when we shall have great passions which might astonish us, so that we should not know which way to turn, we should pray God that it may please him to direct us; and if there be confusions as touching our natural sense, that the light of the faith given to us may so surmount them, that we may know what way we have to hold.

Now upon this Moses relates that God sent yet a torture more bitter by far to his servant Abraham than the others. For when he walks with his son Isaac, the boy says to him, My father. Let us not think that this escaped from Isaac's mouth by mere chance; but God willed thus to try Abraham's faith, as if he would pierce his very heart. There is nothing that could bring so keen an anguish to Abraham as this word, so full of tenderness — My father. Behold, then, as it were a sword to wound Abraham mortally; and all this (as I have said) comes from the counsel of God, who here willed to give us a pattern and a mirror of such constancy, that when we shall have to do battle against all the temptations of the world, we should know that we shall scarcely have endured the hundredth part of what our father endured, and overcame. Abraham answers, My son, here I am. The boy then says to him, Behold the wood and the fire, but there is no beast, he says, to sacrifice. Isaac is already well aware that they are going to make an offering to God, and he does not know what that offering will be — he asks.

Was it possible that Abraham should be tormented to this degree, and that he should bear it? But (as I have said) God spared him in nothing, so that we might take all the more courage when it is a question of surmounting all that might debauch us, and might make us stray from the right way. This, then, is what we have to retain. It is true that Moses makes a very plain

narration; and when we read these things without thinking why they are written, it is certain that it would pass by quite coldly, and we should not be greatly moved by it. But when we shall have well considered in what state Abraham could be, and what distress he already suffered in his heart, and when thereupon we come to weigh what is here added anew — what anguish must have been his when his son said to him, My father — behold Abraham, who on the one hand beholds the simplicity of his child, and then he may think, Alas, thou knowest not for what thou art prepared. For if a poor man is led to death, and knows nothing of it, though it touch not us at all, and we ought not to be present, yet if only we have this apprehension of it, it is certain that the mere thought will make the tears fall from our eyes. Behold a poor man led to the slaughter like a lamb, and he suspects nothing of it. If we have heard tell of such a thing, it is certain that the very thought of it will be enough to bring tears to our eyes. Now behold Abraham, who sees his son, and then he sees him as a lamb, and it is he himself who leads him to the slaughter; it is he who must cut his throat, it is he who must burn him afterward — and his son, who is there, speaks to him so simply, And where is the beast to sacrifice?

In short, we see that though God today should send us all the afflictions we can imagine, it is nothing compared to what Abraham sustained. And if we allege our infirmity, if we say that our human passions carry us away, let us not think that Abraham was made of iron or of steel any more than we are; but whatever the case, it remains that he had resolved to yield all mastery and superiority to God, and so to subject himself that he renounced himself altogether. This, then, I say, is where we must aim and aspire — however many obstacles we may have, and however much it may seem that we cannot go one step further, yet we must force ourselves, yea, beyond all

our strength. For it is not a question here of our going about it as men of good ability, as though we were people well equipped for it; but let us wait for God to supply what is impossible to us, and to go beyond all our capacities. This, then, is again what we have to retain.

And for the rest, let us not doubt, when so many things come thus to cross our path, that it is God who is at work in it; and let us not think this happens by chance. When on one side we are pricked, and on the other we have some alarm, let us think that God governs and directs everything, and that he does so, that we may learn to rest ourselves the more fully upon him, and not to be armed only in the head or the arm, but on the right hand and on the left — that we be equipped, as Saint Paul also exhorts us, when he calls us to be furnished for battling manfully: he gives us both sword and shield, and helmet, and breastplate, even to the feet; he arms us there from head to foot, as they say. And why? For if it seems that we are well prepared on one side, there is the devil, who according to his subtlety will find some other means to assail us, and will always keep some ambushes in store for us. This, then, is why we must learn betimes to equip ourselves in such a way that the devil can find no breach, and that he can make no opening to gain entrance to us; but that we have wherewith to repel him both on the right hand and on the left. And the answer that Abraham gives to his son shows this all the more clearly: My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a sacrifice, he says.

In these words, we see what has already been declared above — namely, how our faith must pass beyond this world. And likewise, we cannot believe in God, unless we give place to his providence, that it may have its course, yea beyond all that we can judge or apprehend. And indeed, we ought to be well inclined to this, if we consider the works of God, even those which he

sets before our eyes. If we think of the course of nature, we shall see the clouds go this way and that, and meanwhile we know not what God means to do with them. Behold the rain that is about to fall; behold a whirlwind that will be raised up together with a great and sudden rain; behold the sky that will be overcast within a short space, so that where there was fair and clear weather, there will be nothing but obscurity everywhere. We shall see these things; there will be indeed some natural causes which the philosophers will assign, and yet it is certain that we shall be confounded by them. What, then, shall it be when God will proceed in some strange fashion, and will not keep the common and accustomed order? Must not all our senses be dazzled thereby? Thus, we ought to have this instruction, to be ravished with astonishment when it is a question of the incomprehensible power of God. And thus we ought already to be wholly disposed to acknowledge his providence, and to adore it, when he declares to us that he wills to surmount all our senses. But what? It is a pity that we cannot lift up God, so as to say that he can do more than our senses promise us at the first stroke. And this is also why there is so little faith in the world. And even those who have some good affection, and who seem disposed to believe in God, nevertheless have their faith so meagre and so feeble, that it takes nothing to overthrow it.

Now all this evil comes from the fact that we have not this persuasion rooted in us touching the providence of God. When Saint Paul speaks of Abraham (as we have already treated), he says that he gave glory to God, esteeming that he was powerful (Rom. 4:20). And this is part of what he means — that we must refer to the providence of God all things that might torment us, and concerning which we could have no resolution. So much the more, then, must we well meditate upon this doctrine; and thus,

however often and however many fancies may come into our heads to hold us back and to make us grow cold in doing what God has commanded us, let us always have this word to serve us as a shield: God will provide. How is that? It seems often that what God commands us is to bring us many inconveniences. And behold this cursed wisdom of men, which is the greatest enemy of faith, and which always wishes to have the upper hand.

For behold, God who will give commandment to a king, and to a prince, and to all magistrates, that his service should be honoured, and maintained in purity. Now thereupon men look to see how the world hardly obeys — one will see, How now, there will be so many murmurings against us; and then it will be necessary, if such rigor is maintained, that everything break apart. For we see how men do not let themselves easily be governed. There will come, then, troubles. And then when one sees such difficulties, one must moderate oneself in some fashion, or else one sees well that one will never come to the end of it. Behold, I say, the temptations that will beset those who ought to oppose evil. Now what do they do? Commonly those who seem to be the wisest and most prudent unto the end will wish to speak and to negotiate in such fashion that there shall be neither flesh nor fish, as they say. And thereupon behold God, who is set back. First, there is this evil, that one does not obey him roundly as one ought; and then one strips him of the honour that belongs to him. For if one alleges, Oh, such a thing might happen — and is God, then, dead? Has he not foreseen all the inconveniences that might come of it? And if one says, Oh, we must not let it go so, for there is such an evil that would follow — is this not to accuse God of folly, and to strip him of his virtue, as if he could not hold the reins so as to bring it about that he be obeyed in all things according to his will, and yet that there should be a good and happy outcome?

As much is true also of the ministers of the Word of God, for there are very few who can acquit themselves of their duty. It is true that there are many vices which hinder them; but this cursed and diabolical prudence reigns in many, who would not wish to stir up much hatred, much trouble; and thereupon they will bend to every wind, until they find some means to disguise the doctrine of the Gospel — as there are many today who do this. For whence has come this sorcery of those who have wished to find a middle way between the Papacy and Christianity, except from this — that they have looked, How now? And to change things thus, one would have to make, as it were, a whole new world. Oh, that cannot be, for one has already seen the signs that everything will go to ruin. Thus one must be content to go by halves, and to swim between two waters.

Behold how the doctrine of God is corrupted; and yet (as we have shown) when there shall be some beginning of evil in this way, things will always go from bad to worse, so that order can no longer be established when one would wish it. And this must not be applied only to public persons; but when a man is to govern his family, and to rule his household well, he will always be thinking, Oh, if I do what God commands, such a thing might happen to me; or else, when a man has to earn his living, he will look, Oh, if I go about it in such simplicity, I shall be here as a sheep among the jaws of wolves, for there is so much cunning and so much craft in the world, that I shall be deceived at every turn; everyone catches what he can for himself, and if I do not do the same, what will become of me? Oh, if I make myself a sheep or a ewe, it is certain that they will eat the very wool off my back. Let each man think, then, as though there were no providence of God at all.

And besides, when it is a question of exposing our life, as today, however little it may be said to each of us, Take thy son, yea thine only son Isaac,

and slay him — yet in general God commands that we do him homage, in confessing that he is our Father and Saviour. Our Lord Jesus Christ wills that we be his witnesses, yea before the most perverse, and before the greatest tyrants of the world; for he does not wish that we should confess him only before those who desire that his kingdom should come, but before his enemies who oppose it, before persecutors. Behold, then, the confession that he requires of us. And thereupon what will come of it? Oh, there will be some who will say, And what profit will my death be? And when I shall be put to death, no more will be said of it after three days; nay, it will only bring scandal to many. For many will say, Oh, he had better have kept quiet; we were at rest, no one asked anything of us, and now here is a persecution stirred up — see what he has profited by advancing thus! Yet has God, then, understood nothing of what he willed, when he commanded that sacrifice should be made to him of the confession of our faith, and that he willed that our life should be despised for the honour of his holy Name? Did he not know well enough what would come of it? And do we think ourselves wiser and more advised than he?

And thus, it is not without cause that I have said we ought to retain this teaching among others, when it is said, My son, God will provide a sacrifice: for it is as much as if we were exhorted by the Holy Spirit not to be too discreet (as they say), and not to be too ready to dispute. And what then? What can be done? But let us hold this altogether resolved, that God has spoken, and let him do as he sees fit. Let come what may, for it is certain that all will go well when he is our guide. But meanwhile our senses must fail us in this respect, and we must be as willing blind men — that is to say, that we should not be so sharp-sighted as these worldly-wise men, who wish to know and to judge everything, even to controlling what God

ought to do; but that it should suffice us to be quit of our duty, and not to snatch from him what is his.

Thus we see how faith cannot exist unless we lift up the providence of God; and the way to lift it up is that we should refer to it wholly all that can only engender in us scruples, and entangle us in many perplexities — so that, in short, we might say, Lord, thou leadest me as it shall please thee; for as for me, I am a poor blind man, and I must not go in this matter as if it were an abyss too deep to cast myself down into it, when I should wish to guide myself. This, then, is the true wisdom that all the children of God ought to have — that is, not to be too wise, but to content themselves with their measure; and when they see the way that is shown to them, that they walk in it; and though they cannot attain to their goal at the first stroke, that they do not for all that cease always to continue. That if they see, as it were, mountains rising up to stop them, that there be, as it were, a sea, that it should seem the gulf is near — let them surmount all that, and know that it is not in vain that it is written, that God has commanded his angels to guide us, and to direct us in our ways — that is to say, that we shall not turn aside from what he teaches us; but let us know that he will always find a way out in things that seem perplexing to us, and where we shall see nothing but confusion.

For the rest, one might here find some infirmity in Abraham, amid such excellent virtues, for it seems indeed that there was some feint in it, in that he says he will return with his son, once they shall have worshiped and sacrificed on the mountain — for already he well knew that his son Isaac was to die there, or at the least he held himself assured and resolved on it. Now this is not permitted to us in any fashion, that it should be lawful to lie. It seems, then, that Abraham failed in this respect. And for this cause some

think that he spoke by a prophetic spirit; but this would be to annihilate his faith, forasmuch as it was necessary that he should be ignorant of what was to come to pass. For if God had already revealed to him that his son should escape, there would have been in him neither zeal nor constancy; but when he thinks that he must kill his own son, behold the testimony of his obedience. And how, then, is it that he says his son shall return with him? Now let us not find this too strange. For when we are thus surprised and pressed by vehement passions, some things will escape us that are not altogether fitting, so that we shall mingle the one with the other. Thus, then, Abraham has spoken little as a man whose senses were, as it were, bewildered. Not that he did not know what he had to do — for if he had gone about it rashly, that too would not have been to render a service acceptable to God — but it is certain that Abraham had so fixed all his affections upon doing what God commanded him, that he was there as it were a man ravished, so to speak.

And we see this in those whom God has fortified. As, if a man must go to his death, he thinks nothing of it, and he does not even wish that one should speak to him of it, or divert him from it; for he makes his reckoning thus: I must now present myself before God, and he causes all the rest to be forgotten. Thus, then, it happened to our father Abraham, who has not thought distinctly of all that he ought to answer touching the sacrifice, but only says, We will go and sacrifice to God, and having made our offering we will return. This, then, is as to this point. Now it is said that Abraham and his son went on further. It is not without cause that Moses puts this twice — They went both together, and then, They went on further. When he says that they went together, this has been to advise us what vehemence of passion Abraham had with his son. For sometimes company will cause us

not to be so moved nor so troubled; but when a man is alone, it is then that he suffers all the more. Now Abraham finds himself there alone with his son when he walks and thus leads him along; and even after this, having thus answered, he goes on further — this is to magnify all the more the virtue that he had, in that nothing has ever turned him aside, since he has always pursued his course, inasmuch as God led him. And thus, we see how he was strengthened from on high; for it was impossible that, according to man, he could ever have come to the end of surmounting such difficulties. God, then, held out his hand of strength to him.

But what is written of him is for our instruction, that we may know that Abraham, however weak a man he was like ourselves, nevertheless did not fail to overcome all that was repugnant to his faith, inasmuch as God assisted him. And when today we acknowledge our weakness, that is not so that we should flatter ourselves by it, and take excuse from it, as many do; but that it should spur us on, so that we should call upon God, and look to him for what we lack, and that we should walk on in such perseverance, that when the devil shall have contrived on this side and on that to debauch us and to make us turn bridle, nevertheless we should go always further forward. For what is here said of the journey of three days, this is to show us that we have to continue as long as it shall please God. It is true that our temptations will endure sometimes for three months, and a year, and ten, and our whole life, and we must even endure it. But let us note that Abraham was tempted also in other ways; yea, for the whole of his life, for he has not yet had rest, even after having recovered his son Isaac, but in one single kind of temptation we see terrible combats. And thus, let us be incited to pray to God, and to continue from day to day without end and without ceasing.

There is yet further to note what we shall see more fully hereafter — that is, the obedience of Isaac; for it was needful in truth that he should be sacrificed of his own good will, and at the least that he should have an affection to conform and to fashion himself to his father, so as to make an offering to God. This is why it is expressly said that they went both together, and that Isaac carried the wood. And thus let us learn to conform ourselves so entirely to the will of God, that although we must do violence to our passions and hold ourselves captive (as we have already said), nevertheless we should not let ourselves be brought to it grudgingly, but frankly and of our own good will; for it is needful that this combat be in all the faithful — that is to say, however much they may have many regrets, and however much God exercises them so vehemently that they have some doubts and some remorse, even though they be sometimes as it were vexed at being thus assailed — yet in the end they must make their resolution to submit themselves and to subject themselves to the will of God; and that their passions, which are contrary to it, should not hinder them from being altogether subject to it, so that it be of their own good will that they yield themselves to him, both in life and in death.

Example: behold our Lord Jesus Christ, who says to Saint Peter, When thou shalt be old, they shall lead thee whither thou wouldst not (John 21:18). Now it is certain that when Saint Peter endured for the Gospel, this was not as one dragged by force, unwilling, gnashing his teeth — it was of his own good will, and he offered to God a voluntary sacrifice. And yet our Lord Jesus Christ says that he will not go willingly. Behold, then, how there must be a double will in the faithful; and these are not incompatible things. By our nature we shall always be incited to rebel against God. Behold a will that is evil. Now it must be tamed, and we must have another will that

surmounts it, and that we should love better to die in order to conform ourselves to the will of God, than to live, and yet in the meantime to reject his yoke. This, then, is what we have still to retain touching what is said, that Isaac walked together with his father, and that they went on further. Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God in acknowledgment of our faults, praying him that he would so make us feel them, that we may hate them, and strip ourselves of them and renounce them entirely. And that meanwhile he would bear with us so patiently in our weaknesses, that he would not fail to hold our service acceptable to him, though it be imperfect, and though there be many things in it which might rightly be reproved by him. And for the rest, that we should learn to commit ourselves so wholly to his guidance, that we should not have our eyes too curiously fixed to see more than is permitted us; but that we should wait for him to give a good outcome always to our ways, provided that we seek only to follow where he calls us, and that we tend always toward the goal he has set before us. That not only, etc.

THE THIRD SERMON

Preached on Tuesday, the eleventh day of June, 1560

Genesis, chapter 22

...caught in a thicket by his horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place, The Lord will see (or, will provide); as it is said to this day, In the mount the Lord was seen (or, will be provided).

We began yesterday to declare that not only did Abraham give a sign of the obedience he wished to render to God, in that he was ready to slay his son, but that Isaac consented to it likewise. For it is certain that he would not have suffered himself to be bound had he been willing to resist. He was not a small child of seven years old; he already had his strength and vigour. His father, then, would not have bound him by force, unless he had consented to it. And in this we see how he too avowed himself willing to be sacrificed. Yet even though he was not in fact bound with any struggle, Abraham did not fail to know that no circumstance was

wanting on his own part to make the sacrifice complete. Here, then, on the one side is Isaac, who is bound, so that God might be obeyed; and yet for all that, he yields himself of his own good will.

Upon this we have to note what was touched upon yesterday — that we must take our affections captive in order to dedicate ourselves to God, and above all when it is a question of renouncing ourselves and our own life, following what was alleged of Saint Peter. For when our Lord Jesus Christ told him that he would be led where he would not, this does not mean that he did not accept death patiently, and even that he went to it of a willing affection, and that he did not prefer to die for the testimony of the Gospel above all the lives of the world; but it was because he was not without feeling, and might, according to the flesh and according to his natural sense, have some repugnance.

Thus, then, in the first place we are advised to mortify our affections, that God may have dominion over us, and that nothing may hinder us from living and dying to him. When it shall please him to take us out of this world, we must be altogether ready to depart; it must be done, I say, with combat, for we shall never be so ready to leave this place (as Saint Paul also speaks of it) except that when we shall have known that the glory of God is far more precious than our life, and that on the other side, if this lodging be thrown down, which is but leaves and perishable matter, we have a building in heaven which is far better — this it is that will make us take death willingly, and even come before God with head uplifted, knowing that we go forth as out of a prison. For this cursed captivity, which each of us must feel in himself, will never cease until God has stripped us of this corruptible flesh. This, then, is how we must resist our human affections, so as to let ourselves be governed by God, in such a way that he may be Lord and

Master of our life. Now as we must make such effort, so on the other side let us not lose courage, however much there is some infirmity in us which holds us back. And when it shall be a question of death, that we shall be afraid, that we shall wish to flinch or draw back if it were possible for us — when, then, we shall feel such conflicts, let us not think that God does not accept our service, provided that we take pains to tame what belongs to our flesh; and that we always make this resolution, that though we be shaken this way and that, we return always to this — that God has given me my life, and I must resign it into his hands; and moreover, that he wills that I should employ myself, living and dying, in his service; and if his Name be glorified by my death, so let it be, and let me pass by that way.

If, then, we can gain this over our head, God will accept the service that we render him as valid, though it costs us pains and sweat (in a manner of speaking), inasmuch as in our nature there will always be some rebellion. Now upon this it is said that the Angel cried out of heaven to Abraham, and forbade him to touch the child. And why? I have known, he says, that thou lovest me, since thou hast not spared thine only son for my sake. Here God declares, when he commanded Abraham to slay his son, that it was not that it should be repugnant to himself, seeing that he had given Isaac to him; he did not wish that his promise should perish and be abolished, but only that he wished to test his faith. Here, then, is the first point we have to note — that God shows here his intention, and to what end he willed that Isaac should be offered up in sacrifice. It was not indeed that he called him to death, but he wished to examine the constancy of Abraham, as we have also seen at the first verse of this chapter, that God had tempted Abraham more than ever. Now this point is very profitable to us, for it was to trouble both Abraham and the whole world, to say that God had thus contradicted

himself, as it appeared. And indeed, it was needful (as we have shown) that Abraham should take this resolution: that God could ratify his promise even though his son Isaac should die, and that he could raise up salvation from the ashes that would have been made of his body.

Yet nevertheless it seems that there is here some diversity between these two sentences of God; and yet here is what may remove from us all doubts and scruples that we might have about this — when it is said that God has willed to test the faith of Abraham. And we must well note what he says: I have known that thou lovest me, when thou hast not spared thine only son. When God says that he has known, this is not because all things are not present to him, for he sounds the hearts and the most secret thoughts; there is nothing hidden from him, and whatever hypocrisy there may be in us, still all this is always reserved to him, that he sees all that is most profound in all our thoughts — as Jeremiah speaks of it in the seventeenth chapter. For there he says that men are so crooked, and have so many hiding-places within themselves, that it seems their heart is a very abyss. But nevertheless, he says, they shall not deceive God: however much they disguise themselves, and transfigure themselves, and have so many lies to hide themselves before the world, yet God always retains his office. Since it is so, then, it is certain that God does not wait for us to show him outwardly what is in us. But, nevertheless, though he sees neither feet nor hands, still he does see what we have of thoughts and affections. But he speaks thus after the common manner, that he knows what is proved, not merely because he makes it known to us, as some have expounded — that is too meager an explanation — but because he proves in fact what was beforehand in doubt. So much, then, for this word.

Now let us come to the love of which he speaks: I have known that thou hast loved me, he says. And how? Had not Abraham already given sufficient proof of it before? For we know that God had tried him in many ways. But this still lacked, and we could not judge it according to our own sense. But since God has thus pronounced it, let us hold to his decree. And thus this is still a point well worth noting: when we shall have walked in the fear of God, and shall have testified for some time that we desire to serve and honour him, each of us would wish to take his leave, so as to say, Oh, I have done enough already, and what more does God require? This is how we would wish to reckon with God, in such a way that he should let us go, and press us no further. But let us look whether we are like Abraham, even though we should leave off this act which he did, being willing to slay his son. Behold Abraham, who has left his homeland and the place of his birth; he has let himself be governed by God without knowing where he was going; he has been driven about the whole country, this way and that; famine has chased him into Egypt; he is tormented more and more, so that it seems God has always his hand lifted up, and the scourge in his fist to strike upon him. And this did not last for only a year or two, but he ceased not for the space of thirty and forty years to be thus afflicted, so that it seemed God trod him underfoot every day. Has he endured so much? Has he had so victorious a constancy that we are compelled to marvel at it? Yet still God says that he has known, when it was needful, whether he loved him or not.

And what shall it be, then, when each of us shall have acquitted himself in some small measure of his duty, and under colour of that we shall have taken license to hold ourselves at ease and at rest, and shall wish to enter into a reckoning with God, so as to say that he ought not to press us any further? Let us note well, then, that it is not for us to put an end, or to set a

measure, to all the exercises of our faith, so as to say that when we shall have employed all our strength for the honour of God, we think that is enough already done, and that others may well take their turn, and that we may hold ourselves free and quit of it. Now it is not for us to come to that. And why? For God reserves this knowledge and judgment to himself. And we see, since he protests that he has not yet known that Abraham loved him, that in this he declares that he had not yet sufficient approval of it, however much he had endured, however great a zeal he had shown, and however he had persisted for so long a space of time. Let us know, then, that though we could show a hundred times more than any of us is able to show, still we must walk yet further, and be prompt and diligent there, until God declares that he has known it, and that he is content. This, then, is one point.

Now there is also this to note, that the chief service that God demands is that we love him; for servile fear would be nothing, when we should tremble before his majesty, and then we should do what he commands us in spite of ourselves — God would reject all that. It is true that sometimes it will still seem that he accepts a forced obedience; but that is not what he approves. That is done for example's sake, and yet meanwhile he rejects the persons when they have not a free and liberal will. The chief thing, then, of our life is that we love God, as he also declares in the summary of the Law: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, he says. He could have used the word fear; but that would not have been enough, for (as I have said) we would serve God only by halves, if we were moved only for the authority he has over us. And that would be nothing but smoke. But when we love him, his service is at the same time lovable to us. For David does not say only that the Law of God has been precious to him above gold and silver, but also that it has been sweet to him as honey. Thus, then, whereas we are given

over to our pleasures and delights, and the concupiscences of our flesh brutalize us, and carry us away so, and so allure us, that we ask for nothing but to embrace the vanities that present themselves — instead, then, of that whereto by nature we are inclined, God wills to change us: that is to say, that instead of our concupiscences drawing us this way and that, we should have this affection which surmounts them, namely, that we take more pleasure in giving ourselves to him, and that we be governed by his Holy Spirit, to conform ourselves to his justice. That we should, then, take more pleasure in that, than in all our vicious and corrupt lusts.

And for the rest, the love of God cannot be without reverence. We do not love him as our inferior, nor as our companion and equal, but as our Father. And this too is why he says by his Prophet, If I be a Father, where is the love that you bear me? He notably attributes this word love to the Father. Now he sets forth at the same time also the word Master; but above all he names himself Father, and not without cause. For if we knew God only as our superior, it is certain that we would indeed be moved to submit ourselves to him; but (as I have already said) that would be a servile fear. But the chief thing is that we hold him for our Father, and that we be, as it were, ravished to conform ourselves to his will, since it has pleased him to adopt us for his children. From this, then, proceeds this voluntary reverence. And thus our hearts will be drawn away from all these vanities to which they are inclined, until God dedicates them to himself. Let us note well, then, that to approve our life to God, and to be well ordered, it is not enough only that we do what he commands us, but that we desire also to do it, and that we take captive all our passions and cupidities that resist our being drawn to God, so as to be joined to him and to his justice, and to cleave to it. This, then, is again what we have to retain upon this word Love.

Now he adds, giving the reason why he has known that Abraham loved him: Since thou hast not spared thine only son, he says. Here is the touchstone to which we must come, to know whether we love God or not. It is true that each will boast that nothing is lacking to him; but meanwhile we are not competent judges in our own cause. It must therefore come wholly to the appearance of God, and to his tribunal. Now it is expressly said that when we shall have spared nothing for the love of God, then we shall have certain and infallible testimony that we love him. On the contrary, if we spare anything when it is a question of his service, behold our hypocrisy discovered, which beforehand was not known, nor could it be judged. In short, just as the perfection of Christians is to cleave to God with a free will, so must the second be joined to it — namely, that to love God we should be ready to forsake everything, however desirable it may be. And that we learn to prefer his honour above all things, the most precious that we have, even to not sparing father, nor mother, nor wife, nor children, nor our own lives. This, then, is what we have to meditate upon our whole life long, when we would know and well examine whether we have profited in the fear of God and in his love, that we look — behold, thou art given to thy goods, thou too greatly desirest honours. Let a man come to that point, and enter into reckoning with himself without dissimulation: if it should be needful for thee to renounce all the honours of the world, that thou shouldst be despised, that men should spit in thy face, and that this were required for the honour of God — how wouldst thou bear it?

If such a man is found, alas, I do not know: if he still feels himself so hindered by his ambition, that he cannot be there as lying quite flat, whenever it shall so please God, oh, it is certain that he has not yet come where he ought. Let him force himself, then, and go on further. So too he

who has goods and possessions, and has traffic in merchandise — let him consider: Well now, if it were needful that thou shouldst become poor, what wouldst thou do? If God willed, for the glory of his Name, that thou hadst no bread to eat, what wouldst thou do? If a man is found who says, Oh, it would be impossible for me to endure such want, I would rather die this very hour than suffer such a scarcity — let him think, Alas, I am still very far from God: I must therefore strive better than ever. And so it is with all the other kinds of poverty. If it were needful that one should leave his country, another his wife and children, and could not tear himself away from that, there are great obstacles that would hinder him from ranging himself. Let him know it. Well now, I thought I was quite obedient to God; but I have thought so only in this — it has been but a vain imagination by which I was deceived. I must therefore strip myself of these passions, and begin to renounce myself and all that I love, and let God know that I am given to him, and that he approves my service. This, then, is what we have to retain of this passage.

Now it is said thereupon that Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a ram caught in a thicket by the horns. Abraham went and took it, and offered it up in sacrifice in the place of his son Isaac. Here we see that God was content with the obedience of Abraham, that he did not require of him that he should actually slay his son. It is true that he had commanded him to do so, for it was needful that Abraham should so prepare himself; but when it came to the deed, God declared his own counsel — namely, that he had only wished to call Abraham to this trial of faith and patience, and that he was ready to renounce the fatherly love he bore to Isaac, and all that he had expected from him, seeking nothing else but the truth of God — yea, and in seeking it, that he should not look to the means by which it might be

known and made visible to him, but knowing that it would have its effect, however much everything seemed to contradict it. This, then, is why this ram is offered in sacrifice, and not Isaac.

Yet meanwhile we have to note that God gave this ram to Abraham, so that he might render him solemn praise for the grace that he had done him beyond his hope. It is true that God had been well content with the faith of Abraham; but yet it is because he wills that there be a sacrifice for more certain testimony, as the custom was in that time among the ancient fathers, and this was in expectation of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. For today it is not lawful to offer either sheep or calves to God: this would be to derogate from the death and passion of his only Son, in which we have a perpetual sacrifice, and which it is not lawful to repeat. Thus, then, today all figures and ceremonies are done away with. It suffices that we protest how much we are bound and obligated to God for all his benefits: that each in his own privacy acknowledge them, and that after having assured ourselves of it also with the mouth and with a courage that we hold wholly of him.

But then it was needful (as I have said) that the fathers should exercise themselves in this manner of sacrificing, and this was to show that no thanksgivings can be accepted of God except by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ — as today the Apostle brings us back to this truth in the last chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when he says that by Jesus Christ we today offer the sacrifices of praise, which are the vows of our mouth. He shows by this that sacrifices have been nothing except toward the end to which they tended. And moreover, if we did not have the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if our prayers and thanksgivings were not purified by him, it is certain that nothing could come forth from us that was not defiled. For inasmuch as we are full of filth and pollution, we must needs sully and

pollute the most excellent and most precious things there are. As to pray to God is a work that God approves above all, as to do him homage of our life, and to confess that all good proceeds from him — yet meanwhile all this would still be defiled, insofar as it comes from us, unless it were purified by the means of our Lord Jesus Christ. This, then, is why the ancient fathers exercised themselves in these outward sacrifices.

Now it is notably said that Abraham offered a ram in the place of his son Isaac. And upon this the Apostle also says that he recovered his son as it were from death, yea by a similitude. He uses the word Parable, as if he said that Isaac was already as good as dead, when he was laid upon the altar; there remained no more expectation but that he must die. Now there was here a likeness of the resurrection (says the Apostle) when Isaac remained alive. For what distance was there between Isaac and a dead man? I speak as we would judge according to men. Behold, then, how God has already set forth, as in a mirror, the resurrection that we ought all to hope for. Here, then, we have to note in the first place, that when we doubt of the resurrection, we must lift up our eyes to the infinite power of God, and not doubt that he is powerful to draw us back from the grave and from corruption; behold, then, the doctrine of the resurrection, which is given to us as pictured in a visible image in the person of Isaac — this is for one point.

And upon this the Apostle also shows that Abraham was not disappointed, in that he so greatly glorified God, that he doubted not but that even though Isaac should die, God would not fail to be able to raise up seed from him. There are things incompatible at first sight, that Isaac should die, and yet that from his seed the salvation of the world should proceed. Yes, but Abraham was so persuaded that God is Lord over death, that he concluded

he would find the means, whatever it might be, that the promise should be fulfilled — and that if the thing were impossible according to human apprehension, he would have all the more occasion to exalt and magnify the power of God, when he should have accomplished what he could not comprehend according to his natural sense. This, then, is what we have to retain from what the Apostle says: that Abraham was not disappointed in believing God, for he had laboured in such a way that he was astonished by it as by a dream. Now nevertheless we have also to note, following the point already touched upon above, that to live rightly we must die to ourselves.

In this ram we have, as it were, an image of our flesh. For behold Isaac, who is as it were resuscitated: he lives, and God preserves him miraculously, and the ram in the meanwhile answers for him. Behold, then, what sacrifices we must today offer to God — namely, that all that is of our nature should be extinguished and abolished, and then our reason too, for that is the worst thing there is in us: that which is praised and esteemed so highly — that is to say, this prudence and this wisdom over which the devil rules — must be put under foot, and we must begin by dedicating ourselves to God from this very point; and indeed this is a part of our flesh. For when Scripture speaks of Flesh, it does not mean only what is hidden beneath the skin and the hide, but all that we have from our mother's womb. And thus, it is needful that all this should go the way of the ram, and be consumed by the fire, and that God should abolish all that is ours: and then we shall live as we ought, and shall be offered to God, as it is here set forth in Isaac. For though the knife did not pass through his throat, yet nonetheless he was a sacrifice to God.

It is needful, then, that we begin by that — that is, that all that comes from us and from our nature be abolished, as also there is need of it. This, then, is what we have to retain. And for the rest, let us learn that when God has pity on us, and delivers us from the anguishes into which he has put us to test our faith and obedience, that it is for the very purpose that such a benefit should be known, and that we should have our mouths open to bless his holy Name. For if we bury his benefits, so much the more do we provoke his terrible curse upon our heads, forasmuch as we shall have profaned a thing so holy. Let us learn, then, so to acknowledge the goodness of God toward us, that we never forget the signs that he gives us of being our Father. And that we show on our part that we seek nothing but that he be known in his works, as it is said in Psalm one hundred and sixteen: What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits he has done me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord. Now David speaks there according to the custom of his time, for the Cup of salvation was to signify that God had delivered those who were at the extremity. Thus, then, today, as often as God succours us in our need, let us learn that he requires of us an act of thanksgiving — not that this brings him either heat or cold, but for our own good and salvation: so that when we shall see what he gives us, we may be more and more confirmed to trust in him, and to call upon him. This, then, in sum is what we have to retain.

Now it is said thereupon that Abraham named the mountain, The Lord will see (or provide); and that afterward his successors called this mountain, The Lord has been seen. Here Abraham shows such constancy as it ought to be in all the faithful, and this too is recorded for us, that we should follow his example — namely, that we should always trust in God when we can do no more, and when all seems desperate. And then when God has given us

some respite, and things go well, and we are at rest, let us also always consider the providence of God. Some, when they shall be in such great necessity that everything shall fail them, will have some movement to run to God. As we see that all who are pressed by some evil will have their refuge in God — not that they go there of a right affection, but they are driven to it, even the most stupid; those who are like brute beasts, when there is some great affliction, it is certain that God draws them to himself so forcibly that they are there as if ravished by a gust of wind and whirlwind. Thus God will be called upon by many people, as it is also spoken of in Psalm one hundred and seven — that is, when necessity presses them. Yet if God sets them at rest and at their ease, they remember him no more; they do but brush the ear (as they say), and there they are, quit of it, as it seems to them.

And this too is why God complains that those who have turned to him in their afflictions are not converted, but that they have unbent their bow at once, and have become faint and cold, and even have altogether forsaken him. Others in their prosperity will bless God. And the hypocrites have this too commonly, that if God treats them to their liking, they will bless God with full mouth, there is nothing but for them; but if God changes, and withdraws his blessing from them, and sends them some torment, then they gnash their teeth, and it is no longer a question of saying, O the good God, as they had pronounced it feignedly, but they will blaspheme him to the full throat. Behold, then, how hypocrites, by their spite and by their murmurings, will show well enough that they do not know how to serve God. And these are two vicious extremes that we see commonly among men. For God shows diverse examples. How is it that Abraham speaks in this extreme anguish in which he is, when he must kill his own son? The

Lord will provide: for behold a word that wounds him to the very depth of his heart, My father, where is the sacrifice? The Lord will provide, he says. Behold, then, how Abraham cuts short all disputes, and resolves that God will guide all that he does; and we must follow him in this, having, as it were, our eyes closed — and yet meanwhile that we ground and rest our foundation upon his providence.

Behold, then, how in fact Abraham did, when God held him (so to speak) as it were upon the rack, that he was not only pressed with anxiety, but with such sadness that he was as a poor man plunged in despair — The Lord will provide, he says. Now also we see that God rejoiced him, and that he has whereof to sacrifice and to render him thanksgiving: he offers a ram, though he draws it not from his own stable — God gives it to him so wholly that there is nothing of his own therein. In this God wills to testify all the more his goodness. Abraham, then, has he resolved himself in this — that God would provide, to succour him from this anguish in which he was? God now gives him occasion of joy, and wills that this be engraved in his memory, and that all the time of his life he have whereof to run to God, and that he continue in it, not only for this little time he has yet to live, but he wills that this title be engraved on the mountain, so that his successors might speak of it, and that this benefit might be memorable, that it be in everyone's mouth, and that it be known. Behold, then, God who has tested the faith of our father Abraham, even to the death of his son, and yet meanwhile it cost him nothing. For if all this had not been done thus, the grace of God would not have been so visibly known in the protection that we see in Isaac, when he is drawn back as it were from death to life. And Abraham himself would not have apprehended it so well: for it was as if God had descended from heaven, and had said to him, Look now, thou hast

not here only a mortal creature, but thou hast a son in whom I declare my virtue, and thou canst already taste that the salvation of the world shall proceed from thence. Abraham, then, wills that this be known and celebrated among his successors, and that it serves them for instruction and perpetual remembrance. This, then, is what we have to retain from this passage.

And thus, let us learn always to meditate on the providence of God in the whole of our life, in such a way that if we have some vexation which torments us and engenders in us anxiety, let us learn (I say) to rest ourselves in God, since it is his office to provide for everything. It is true that he will still leave us some foresight, as each must have care of his family, that we should have industry to apply ourselves to what is our duty, and that each also serve his neighbours; but nevertheless God must provide over and above us, and when things grow obscure to us, and God himself brings us into such perplexities that we shall see no outlet, let us learn (I say) to make it our honour that he be wise for us — that is to say, that it suffices us that he have the conduct of our life, and that we let ourselves be governed by him, and walk where he commands us.

Behold how, in all our vexations, perplexities, and anguishes, we must have our refuge in the Providence of God, knowing that it is his to govern us; and when he shall dispose of us according to his will, all will go well, for his goodness and his mercy, his virtue and his wisdom, will be for our preservation. And likewise, on the contrary, when we shall be at peace and at rest, let us not fail nevertheless to hold ourselves always under this rein, that God must provide, and that we should not be like those whose eyes swell with fat, as those who are full of pride. When some shall be rich, others in credit and authority, others shall have the support of men on their

side — behold them so lulled or benumbed thereby, that they think no more of the Providence of God: it seems to them they have the wind in their sails, as they say. Now for this cause, though God make us prosper, and though everything come to us to our liking, let us not fail always to have our eyes lifted up to the Providence of God, knowing that all good comes from him, and that he can take it away when it shall please him, and that he can also continue it when we shall rest ourselves in him alone. Now Moses adds that finally this mountain has been called, God will be seen there. It might seem that the name was changed by error, for there is great diversity between these two things — that God sees, and that he is seen. But the successors wished to show that when we do this honour to God, of being well persuaded that he sees, that is to say, that he has enough wisdom to guide us, that he also shows himself, and that he has been seen of us.

There are, then, two things, as we have treated above in speaking of Hagar: for she said, I have seen after him who has seen me. Hagar confessed that God had seen her, but that was when she thought not of it at all; and in the end she saw God, but that was too late. For Hagar was there as a lost and strayed sheep; and thus God must see us, while we think not of him at all. Now here is the true order that we must hold — that we know that God sees, and this implies that we see him too: that is to say, that we have our faith fixed upon him, and that we know that he has taken us into his charge and protection, and that never will he put us out of remembrance, and that he has the means to succour us in all our distresses. Behold, then, how we see God by faith, knowing that he is powerful enough to provide us with all that shall be needful, and to draw us out of all the miseries and poverties in which we are, forasmuch as we are in his hand. Now have we begun by there attributing to him this title and this office of Seer? Then he

appears to us — that is to say, we see him on our side; and then by experience he shows himself, that it is not in vain that we have done him this honour of confessing that he sees enough for us, though we ourselves be blind. Behold, then, how Abraham in the first place pronounced that God sees, and then that he imposed the name on the mountain, God will provide — that is to say, that he foresees all that we need, and all that is required for us. And then his successors have ratified this, saying, God has been seen: as in fact this was a manifest revelation to Abraham, as if he had seen the heavens split open, and as if God had there descended in visible form, when he cried from heaven, Abraham, Abraham, put not thy hand upon the child, and do him no harm: for then God withdrew Isaac as it were from death. And Abraham offered this ram in sacrifice of joy, for the grace that he had received. Behold, then, how God appeared to Abraham, in that he knew manifestly that he was guiding him.

And thus let us profit by this doctrine, and know that in looking to God, yea by the eyes of faith, he will always be sufficient to guide us; and that we shall have good occasion and matter to trust in him, and to rest ourselves upon him, because all creatures are subject to him and obey his commands, as it is said in Psalm one hundred thirty-nine, verse two. Now when we shall have thus looked to God, and shall have attributed to him the praise that belongs to him — that is, to say that it is for him to hold the strong hand over us always — it is certain that he will appear to us, that is to say, that we shall see that all who trust in him shall never be confounded. Let us have, then, this patience: and when our Lord will not have us know how we shall escape some danger, and he will let us steep and languish in many vexations, let us let all that come as it will — God will provide. And then when he shall make us feel that he was thinking of us all the while we

thought he had put us out of remembrance, let us know him, and let us say, God has appeared to us; and let us know that, whatever it be, after we shall have thus disposed all our thoughts to him, and shall have cast all our cares upon him, as it is said in the Psalm, all our solicitude — the Psalm will show that this was not for Abraham alone, nor for the people of the Jews only, that this mountain has had this title, but that it is for our instruction. It is certain that always, in opportune time, he will show himself to us — as also we see that the ancient fathers rendered him this testimony.

Thus, we must do this today, not only with the mouth: for it is not a question only of having the words on our tongue, but that in the whole of our life we should show that truly we believe him to be the seeing God; and then also that he is the God who does not hide himself, according as Isaiah testifies of him. For after having said that he has not spoken in secret, he adds that truly he is the God who sees us. It is true that on another side it is said, Art thou not a God afar off? To show that we must be exercised in faith — that is to say, that God does not show us at the first stroke his virtue, so that we should feel and experience it. But is he thus estranged from us? Then he approaches, yea, and approaches even when we had not thought so, so that we see always accomplished what is here shown us. And therefore, let us learn, in the whole of our life, so to rest ourselves in him, that it may be to wait that finally, after all the visions that we shall have had here below of his succour, after he shall have willed to confirm us in diverse ways in faith and hope, he will give us the final vision, when we shall see him face to face, being transfigured into his glory.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledgement of our faults, praying him that he would make us feel them better than we have done, and that this be always to deaden in us our

wicked desires, which war against his grace and his goodness, and against his Holy Spirit. And that we may walk in such a way that, though there be infirmities in us that hold us back, we nevertheless do not cease to aspire to him all the time that he shall leave us here below. And that we make such efforts against ourselves, that being bound in our passions, we may serve him nonetheless in freedom and liberty, and with a pure and frank will. And that we profit in this more and more, until we come to the heavenly inheritance, where we shall see that those who have trusted in him will not lose their pains, and that there is fruit for those who fear him, who serve and honour him. That not only, etc.