

OpenTheo

THE BOOKS OF HOMILIES: Book 2—XIII. Of the Passion for good Friday

May 1, 2021



Alastair Roberts

For the Easter season, I am reading the Books of Homilies, using John Griffiths' 1859 edition (https://prydain.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/the_two_books_of_homilies.pdf).

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon (https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref_=wl_share).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

A homily for Good Friday concerning the death and passion of our Savior Jesus Christ. For if a mortal man's deed done to the behoof of the commonwealth be had in remembrance of us, with thanks for the benefit and profit which we receive thereby, how much more readily should we have in memory this excellent act and benefit of Christ's death, whereby he hath purchased for us the undoubted pardon and forgiveness of our sins, whereby he made at one the Father of heaven with us, in such wise that he taketh us now for his loving children, and for the true inheritors with Christ, his natural Son, of the kingdom of heaven. And verily, so much more doth Christ's kindness appear unto us, in that it pleased him to deliver himself of all his godly honour, which he was equally in with his Father in heaven, and come down into this veil of misery, to be made mortal man, and to be in the state of a most low servant, serving us for our wealth and profit, us, I say, which were his sworn enemies, which had renounced his holy law and commandments, and followed the lusts and sinful pleasures of our corrupt nature.

Yet, I say, did Christ put himself between God's deserved wrath and our sin, and rent that obligation wherein we were in danger to God, and paid our debt. Our debt was a great deal too great for us to have paid, and without payment God the Father could never be at one with us, neither was it possible to be loosed from this debt by our own ability. It pleased therefore him to be the payer thereof, and to discharge us quite.

Who can now consider the grievous debt of sin, which could none otherwise be paid but by the death of an innocent, and will not hate sin in his heart? If God hateth sin so much, that he would allow neither man nor angel for the redemption thereof, but only the death of his only and well-beloved Son, who will not stand in fear thereof? If we, my friends, consider this, that for our sins this most innocent lamb was driven to death, we shall have much more cause to bewail ourselves, that we were the cause of his death, than to cry out of the malice and cruelty of the Jews which pursued him to his death. We did the deeds wherefore he was thus stricken and wounded, they were only the ministers of our wickedness. It is meet then we should step low down into our hearts, and bewail our own wretchedness and sinful living.

Let us know for a certainty that, if the most dearly beloved Son of God was thus punished and stricken for the sin which he had not done himself, how much more ought we sore to be stricken for our daily and manifold sins which we commit against God, if we earnestly repent us not, and be not sorry for them. No man can love sin, which God hateth so much, and be in his favour. No man can say that he loveth Christ truly, and have his great enemy, sin I mean, the author of his death, familiar and in friendship with him.

So much do we love God and Christ, as we hate sin. We ought therefore to take great heed that we be not favourers thereof, lest we be found enemies to God and traitors to Christ. For not only they which nailed Christ upon the cross are his tormentors and crucifiers, but all they, saith St. Paul, crucify again the Son of God, as much as is in them which do commit vice and sin which brought him to his death.

If the wages of sin be death, and death everlasting, surely it is no small danger to be in service thereof. If we live after the flesh, and after the sinful lust thereof, St. Paul threateneth, yea, almighty God in St. Paul threateneth, that we shall surely die. We can none otherwise live to God but by dying to sin.

If Christ be in us, then is sin dead in us. And if the Spirit of God be in us, which raised Christ from death to life, so shall the same Spirit raise us to the resurrection of everlasting life. But if sin rule and reign in us, then is God, which is the fountain of all grace and virtue, departed from us.

Then hath the devil and his ungracious spirit rule and dominion in us. And surely, if in such miserable state we die, we shall not rise to life, but fall down to death and damnation, and that without end. For Christ hath not so redeemed us from sin, that we

may safely return thereto again.

But he hath redeemed us, that we should forsake the motions thereof, and live to righteousness. Yea, we be therefore washed in our baptism from the filthiness of sin, that we should live afterward in the pureness of life. In baptism we promise to renounce the devil and his suggestions.

We promise to be, as obedient children, always following God's will and pleasure. Then, if he be our Father indeed, let us give him his due honour. If we be his children, let us show him our obedience, like as Christ openly declared his obedience to his Father.

Which, as St. Paul writeth, was obedient even to the very death, the death of the cross. And this he did for us all that believe in him. For himself he was not punished, for he was pure and undefiled of all manner of sin.

He was wounded, saith Esau, for our wickedness, and striped for our sins. He suffered the penalty of them himself to deliver us from danger. He bare, saith Esau, all our sores and infirmities upon his own back.

No pain did he refuse to suffer in his own body, that he might deliver us from pain everlasting. His pleasure it was thus to do for us. We deserved it not.

Wherefore, the more we see ourselves bound unto him, the more he ought to be thanked of us. Yea, and the more hope may we take, that we shall receive all other good things of his hand, in that we have received the gift of his only Son through his liberality. For if God, saith St. Paul, hath not spared his own Son from pain and punishment, but delivered him for us all unto the death, how should he not give us all other things with him? If we want anything either for body or soul, we may lawfully and boldly approach to God as to our merciful Father, to ask that we desire, and we shall obtain it.

For such power is given to us to be the children of God, so many as believe in Christ's name. In his name whatsoever we ask, we shall have it granted us. For so well pleased is the Father, almighty God, with Christ his Son, that for his sake he favoureth us, and will deny us nothing.

So pleasant was this sacrifice and oblation of his Son's death, which he so obediently and innocently suffered, that he would take it for the only and full amends for all the sins of the world. And such favour did he purchase by his death of his heavenly Father for us, that for the merit thereof, if we be true Christians indeed, and not in word only, we be now fully in God's grace again, and clearly discharged from our sin. No tongue surely is able to express the worthiness of this so precious a death.

For in this standeth the continual pardon of our daily offences. In this resteth our justification. In this we be allowed.

In this is purchased the everlasting health of all of our souls. Yea, there is none other thing that can be named under heaven to save our souls, but this only work of Christ's precious offering of his body upon the altar of the cross. So it is there can be no work of any mortal man, be he never so holy, that can be coupled in merits with Christ's most holy act.

For no doubt all our thoughts and deeds were of no value, if they were not allowed in the merits of Christ's death. All our righteousness is far imperfect, if it be compared with Christ's righteousness. For in his acts and deeds there was no spot of sin or of any imperfectness.

And for this cause they were the more able to be the true amends of our unrighteousness. Where are acts and deeds be full of imperfection and infirmities, and therefore nothing worthy of themselves to stir God to any favour, much less to challenge the glory that is due to Christ's act and merit. For not to us, saith David, not to us, but to thy name give the glory, O Lord.

Let us therefore, good friends, with all reverence glorify his name. Let us magnify and praise him for ever. For he hath dealt with us according to his great mercy.

By himself hath he purchased our redemption. He thought it not enough to spare himself, and to send his angel to do this deed. But he would do it himself, that he might do it the better, and make it the more perfect redemption.

He was nothing moved with the intolerable pains that he suffered in the whole course of his long passion, to repent him thus to do good to his enemies. But he opened his heart for us, and bestowed himself wholly for the ransoming of us. Let us therefore now open our hearts again to him, and study in our lives to be thankful to such a Lord, and evermore to be mindful of so great a benefit.

Yea, let us take up our cross with Christ, and follow him. His passion is not only the ransom and whole amends for our sin, but it is also a most perfect example of all patience and sufferance. For if it behoved Christ thus to suffer, and to enter into the glory of his Father, how should it not become us to bear patiently our small crosses of adversity and the troubles of this world? For surely, saith St. Peter, Christ therefore suffered, to leave us an example to follow his steps.

And if we suffer with him, we shall be sure also to reign with him in heaven. Not that the sufferance of this transitory life should be worthy of that glory to come, but gladly should we be content to suffer, to be like Christ in our life, that so by our works we may glorify our Father which is in heaven. And as it is painful and grievous to bear the cross of Christ in the griefs and displeasures of this life, so it bringeth forth the joyful fruit of hope in all them that be exercised therewith.

Let us not so much behold the pain as the reward that shall follow that labour. Nay, let us rather endeavour ourselves in our sufferance to endure innocently and guiltless as our Saviour Christ did. For if we suffer for our deservings, then hath not patience his perfect work in us? But if undeservingly we suffer loss of goods and life, if we suffer to be evil spoken of for the love of Christ, this is thankful of fore-God.

For so did Christ suffer. He never did sin, neither was there any guile found in his mouth. Yea, when he was reviled with taunts, he reviled not again.

When he was wrongfully dealt with, he threatened not again, nor revenged his quarrel, but delivered his cause to him that judgeth rightly. Perfect patience careth not what or how much it suffereth, nor of whom it suffereth, whether of friend or foe, but studieth to suffer innocently and without deserving. Yea, he in whom perfect charity is, careth so little to revenge, that he rather studieth to do good for evil, to bless and say well of them that curse him, to pray for him that pursue him.

According to the example of our Saviour Christ, who is the most perfect example and pattern of all meekness and sufferance, which, hanging upon his cross in most fervent anguish, bleeding in every part of his blessed body, being set in the midders of his enemies and crucifiers, and notwithstanding the intolerable pains which they saw him in, being of them mocked and scorned despitefully, without all favour and compassion, had yet towards them such compassion in heart, that he prayed to his Father of Heaven for them, and said, O Father, forgive them, for they wote not what they do. What patience was it also which he showed when one of his own apostles and servants, which was put in trust of him, came to betray him unto his enemies to the death? He said nothing worse to him but, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Thus, good people, should we call to mind the great examples of charity which Christ showed in his Passion, if we will fruitfully remember his Passion? Such charity and love should we bear one to another, if we will be the true servants of Christ. For if we love but them which love and say well by us, what great thing is it that we do, saith Christ? Do not the painims and open sinners so? We must be more perfect in our charity than thus, even as our Father in Heaven is perfect, which maketh the light of his Son to rise upon the good and the bad, and sendeth his reign upon the kind and unkind.

After this manner should we show our charity indifferently, as well to one as to another, as well to friend as foe, like obedient children, after the example of our good Father in Heaven? For if Christ was obedient to his Father even to the death, and that the most shameful death, as the Jews esteemed it, the death of the cross, why should not we be obedient to God in lower points of charity and patience? Let us forgive then our neighbours their small faults, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us our great. It is not meet that we should crave forgiveness of our great offences at God's hand, and yet will not forgive the small trespasses of our neighbours against us. We do call for mercy in vain, if we will not show mercy to our neighbours.

For if we will not put wrath and displeasure forth of our hearts to our Christian brother, no more will God forgive the displeasure and wrath that our sins have deserved for him. For under this condition doth God forgive us, if we forgive other. It becometh not Christian men to be hard one to another, nor yet to think their neighbour unworthy to be forgiven.

For howsoever unworthy he is, yet is Christ worthy to have thee do thus much for his sake. He hath deserved it of thee, that thou shouldst forgive thy neighbour. And God is also to be obeyed which commandeth us to forgive, if we will have any part of the pardon which our Saviour Christ purchased once of God the Father by shedding of his precious blood.

Nothing becometh Christ's servant so much as mercy and compassion. Let us then be favourable one to another, and pray we one for another that we may be healed from all frailties of our life, the less to offend one the other, and that we may be of one mind and one spirit, agreeing together in brotherly love and concord, even like the dear children of God. By these means shall we move God to be merciful to our sins.

Yea, and we shall be hereby the more ready to receive our Saviour and Maker in his blessed sacrament, to our everlasting comfort and health of soul. Christ delighteth to enter and to dwell in that soul, where love and charity ruleth, and where peace and concord is seen. For thus writeth Saint John, God is charity.

He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him. And by this, saith he, we shall know that we be of God, if we love our brothers. Yea, and by this shall we know that we be shifted from death to life, if we love one another.

But he which hateth his brother, saith the same apostle, abideth in death, even in the danger of everlasting death, and is moreover the child of damnation and of the devil, cursed of God, and hated, so long as he so remain, of God and of all his heavenly company. For as peace and charity make us the blessed children of almighty God, so doth hatred and envy make us the cursed children of the devil. God give us all grace to follow Christ's example in peace and in charity, in patience and in sufferance, that we now may have him our guest to enter and dwell within us, so as we may be in full surety, having such a pledge of our salvation.

If we have him and his favour, we may be sure that we have the favour of God by his means. For he sitteth on the right hand of his Father, as our proctor and attorney, pleading and suing for us in all our needs and necessities. Wherefore, if we want any gift of godly wisdom, we may ask it of God for Christ's sake, and we shall have it.

Let us consider and examine ourselves in what want we be concerning this virtue of charity and patience. If we see that our hearts be nothing inclined thereunto in forgiving them that have offended against us, then let us knowledge our want, and wish of God to

have it. But if we want it, and see in ourself no desire thereunto, verily we be in a dangerous case afore God, and have need to make much earnest prayer to God, that we may have such an heart changed to the graphing in of anew.

For unless we forgive other, we shall never be forgiven of God. No, not all the prayers and merits of other can pacify God unto us, unless we be at peace and at one with our neighbour. Nor all our deeds and good works can move God to forgive us our debts to him, except we forgive to other.

He setteth more by mercy than by sacrifice. Mercy moved our Saviour Christ to suffer for his enemies, it becometh us then to follow his example. For it shall little avail us to have in meditation the fruits and price of his passion, to magnify them, and to delight or trust to them, except we have in mind his examples and passion, to follow them.

If we thus therefore consider Christ's death, and will stick thereto with fast faith for the merit and deserving thereof, and will also frame ourself in such wise to bestow ourselves, and all that we have by charity to the behoof of our neighbour, as Christ spent himself holy for our profit, then do we truly remember Christ's death. And being thus followers of Christ's steps, we shall be sure to follow him thither, where he sitteth now with the Father and the Holy Ghost. To whom be all honour and glory.

Amen. That we may the better conceive the great mercy and goodness of our Saviour Christ in suffering death universally for all men, it behoveth us to descend into the bottom of our conscience, and deeply to consider the first and principal cause wherefore he was compelled so to do. When our great grandfather Adam had broken God's commandment in eating the apple forbidden him in Paradise, at the motion and suggestion of his wife, he purchased thereby, not only to himself, but also to his posterity forever, the just wrath and indignation of God, who, according to his former sentence pronounced at the giving of the commandment, condemned both him and all his to everlasting death, both body and soul.

For it was said unto him, Thou shalt eat freely of every tree in the garden, but as touching the tree of knowledge of good and ill, thou shalt in no wise eat of it, for in what hour soever thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death. Now as the Lord had spoken, so it came to pass, Adam took upon him to eat thereof, and in so doing he died the death, that is to say he became mortal, he lost the favour of God, he was cast out of Paradise, he was no longer a citizen of heaven, but a firebrand of hell and a bond-slave to the devil. To this doth our Saviour bear witness in the gospel, calling us lost sheep, which have gone astray and wandered from the true shepherd of our souls.

For this also doth St. Paul bear witness, saying, that by the offence of only Adam, death came upon all men to condemnation, so that now neither he nor any of his had any right or interest at all in the kingdom of heaven, but were become plain reprobates and castaways, being perpetually damned to the everlasting pains of hell-fire. In this so great

misery and wretchedness, if mankind could have recovered himself again, and obtained forgiveness at God's hands, then had his case been somewhat tolerable, because he might have attempted some way how to deliver himself from eternal death. But there was no way left unto him, he could do nothing that might please God's wrath, he was altogether unprofitable in that behalf, there was none that did good, no not one.

And how then could he work his own salvation? Should he go about to pacify God's heavy displeasure by offering up Brent's sacrifices according as it was ordained in the old law, by offering up the blood of oxen, the blood of calves, the blood of goats, the blood of lambs and so forth? O these things were of no force nor strength to take away sins, they could not put away the anger of God, they could not cool the heat of his wrath, nor yet bring mankind into favour again, they were but only figures and shadows of things to come, and nothing else. Read the epistle to the Hebrews, there shall you find this matter largely discussed, there shall you learn in most plain words that the bloody sacrifice of the old law was imperfect and not able to deliver man from the state of damnation by any means, so that mankind in trusting their unto should trust to a broken staff and in the end deceive himself. What should he then do? Should he go about to observe and keep the law of God divided into two tables, and so purchase to himself eternal life? Indeed, if Adam and his posterity had been able to satisfy and fulfil the law perfectly, in loving God above all things and their neighbour as themselves, then should they have easily quenched the Lord's wrath and escaped the terrible sentence of eternal death pronounced against them by the mouth of almighty God.

For it is written, Do this, and thou shalt live, that is to say, fulfil my commandments, keep thyself upright and perfect in them according to my will, then shalt thou live and not die. Here is eternal life promised with this condition, so that they keep and observe the law. But such was the frailty of mankind after his fall, such was his weakness and imbecility, that he could not walk uprightly in God's commandments, though he would never so feign.

But daily and hourly fell from his bounden duty, offending the Lord his God diverse ways to the great increase of his condemnation, insomuch that the prophet David crieth out on this wise, All have gone astray, all are become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one. In this case, what profit could he have by the law? None at all. For as St. James saith, He that shall observe the whole law, and yet faileth in one point, is become guilty of all.

And in the book of Deuteronomy it is written, Cursed be he, saith God, which abideth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. Behold, the law bringeth a curse with it, and maketh us guilty, not because it is of itself nought or unholy, God forbid we should so think, but because the frailty of our sinful flesh is such that we can never fulfil it according to the perfection that the Lord requireth. Could Adam then, think you, hope or trust to be saved by the law? No, he could not.

But the more he looked on the law, the more he saw his own damnation set before his eyes, as it were in a most clear glass, so that now of himself he was most wretched and miserable, destitute of all hope, and never able to pacify God's heavy displeasure, nor yet to escape the terrible judgment of God, whereinto he and all his posterity were fallen by disobeying the straight commandment of the Lord their God. But oh the abundant riches of God's great mercy! Oh the unspeakable goodness of his heavenly wisdom! When all hope of righteousness was passed on our part, when he had nothing in ourselves whereby he might quench his burning wrath, and work the salvation of our own souls, and rise out of the miserable estate wherein we lay, then, even then, did Christ the Son of God, by the appointment of his Father, come down from heaven, to be wounded for our sakes, to be reputed with the wicked, to be condemned unto death, to take upon him the reward of our sins, and to give his body to be broken on the cross for our offences. He, saith the prophet Esai, meaning Christ, hath borne our infirmities, and hath carried our sorrows.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes are we made whole. St. Paul likewise saith, God made him a sacrifice for our sins which knew no sin, that we should be made the righteousness of God by him. And St. Peter most agreeably writing in this behalf saith, Christ hath once died and suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, etc.

To these might be added an infinite number of other places to the same effect, but these few shall be sufficient for this time. Now then, as it was said at the beginning, let us ponder and weigh the cause of his death, that thereby we may be the more moved to glorify him in our whole life. Which, if you will have more comprehended briefly in one word, it was nothing else on our part but only the transgression and sin of mankind.

When the angel came to warn Joseph that he should not fear to take Mary to his wife, did he not therefore will the child's name to be called Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins? When John the Baptist preached Christ and showed him unto the people with his finger, did he not plainly say unto them, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world? When the woman of Canaan besought Christ to help her daughter which was possessed with the devil, did he not openly confess that he was sent to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel by giving his life for their sins? It was sin then, O man, even thy sin, that caused Christ, the only Son of God, to be crucified in the flesh, and to suffer the most vile and slanderous death of the cross. If thou hadst kept thyself upright, if thou hadst observed the commandments, if thou hadst not presumed to transgress the will of God in thy first father Adam, then Christ, being in form of God, needed not to have taken upon him the shape of a servant. Being immortal in heaven, he needed not to become mortal on earth.

Being the true bread of the soul, he needed not to hunger. Being the healthful water of life, he needed not to thirst. Being life itself, he needed not to have suffered death.

But to these and many other great extremities was he driven by thy sin, which was so manifold and great, that God could be only pleased in him and no other. Canst thou think of this, O sinful man, and not tremble within thyself? Canst thou hear it quietly, without remorse of conscience and sorrow of heart? Did Christ suffer his passion for thee, and wilt thou show no compassion towards him? While Christ was yet hanging on the cross and yielding up the ghost, the Scripture witnesseth that the veil of the temple did rent entwain, that the earth did quake, that the stones clave asunder, that the graves did open, and the dead bodies rise. And shall the heart of man be nothing moved to remember how grievously and cruelly he was handled of the dues for our sins? Shall man show himself to be more hard-hearted than stones, to have less compassion than dead bodies? Call to mind, O sinful creature, and set before thine eyes Christ crucified.

Think thou seest his body stretched out in length upon the cross, his head crowned with sharp thorn, his hands and his feet pierced with nails, his heart opened with a long spear, his flesh rent and torn with whips, his brows sweating water and blood. Think thou hearest him now crying in intolerable agony to his father, and saying, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Couldst thou behold this woeful sight, or hear his mournful voice, without tears, considering that he suffered all this, not for any desert of his own, but only for the grievousness of thy sins? O that mankind should put the everlasting Son of God to such pains! O that we should be the occasion of his death, and the only cause of his condemnation! May we not justly cry, Woe worth the time that ever we sinned! O my brethren, let this image of Christ crucified be always printed in our hearts. Let it stir us up to the hatred of sin, and provoke our minds to the earnest love of Almighty God.

For why, is not sin, think you, a grievous thing in his sight? Seeing for the transgressing of God's precept in eating of one apple, he condemned all the world to perpetual death, and would not be pacified but only with the blood of his own Son. True, yea, most true, is that saying of David, Thou, O Lord, hatest all them that work iniquity, neither shall the wicked and evil man dwell with thee. By the mouth of his prophet Esai, he crieth mainly out against sinners, and saith, Woe be unto you that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were, with cart ropes.

Did not God give a plain token how greatly he hated and abhorred sin, when he drowned all the world save only eight persons, when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone, when in three days' space he killed with pestilence three score and ten thousand for David's offence, when he drowned Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, when he turned Nabucadonozah the king into the form of a brute beast creeping upon all four, when he suffered Ahitophel and Judas to hang themselves upon the remorse of sin, which was so terrible to their eyes. A thousand such examples are to be found in scripture, if a man would stand to seek them out. But what need we? This one example which we have now in hand is of more force, and ought more to move us than all the rest.

Christ being the Son of God and perfect God himself, who never committed sin, was compelled to come down from heaven, and to give his body to be bruised and broken on the cross for our sins. Was not this a manifest token of God's great wrath and displeasure towards sin, that he could be pacified by no other means but only by the sweet and precious blood of his dear Son? O sin, sin, that ever thou shouldst drive Christ to such extremity! Woe worth the time that ever thou camest into the world! But what booteth it now to bewail? Sin is come, and so come that it cannot be avoided. There is no man living, no, not the justest man on the earth, but he falleth seven times a day, as Solomon saith.

And our Saviour Christ, although he hath delivered us from sin, yet not so that we shall be freed from committing sin, but so that it shall not be imputed to our condemnation. He hath taken upon him the just reward of sin, which was death, and by death hath overthrown death, that we, believing in him, might live for ever, and not die. Ought not this to engender extreme hatred of sin in us, to consider that it did violently, as it were, pluck God out of heaven, and make him feel the horrors and pains of death? O that we would sometimes consider this in the midst of our pomps and pleasures! It would bridle the outrageousness of the flesh, it would abate and assuage our carnal effects, it would restrain our fleshly appetites, that we should not run at random, as we commonly do.

To commit sin willfully and desperately, without fear of God, is nothing else but to crucify Christ anew, as we are expressly taught in the epistle to the Hebrews. Which thing, if it were deeply printed in all men's hearts, then should not sin reign everywhere so much as at death, to the great grief and torment of Christ now sitting in heaven? Let us therefore remember and always bear in mind Christ crucified, that thereby we may be inwardly moved both to abhor sin thoroughly, and also with an earnest and zealous heart, to love God. For this is another fruit which the memorial of Christ's death ought to work in us, an earnest and unfeigned love towards God.

So God loved the world, saith St. John, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have life everlasting. If God declared so great love towards us, his seely creatures, how can we have right but love him again? Was not this a sure pledge of his love, to give us his own Son from heaven? He might have given us an angel, if he would, or some other creature, and yet should his love have been far above our deserts? Now he gave us not an angel, but his Son. And what Son? His only Son, his natural Son, his well-beloved Son, even that Son whom he had made Lord and ruler over all things.

Was not this a singular token of great love? But to whom did he give him? He gave him to the whole world, that is to say, to Adam, and all that should come after him. O Lord, what had Adam, or any other man, deserved at God's hands, that he should give us his own Son? We were all miserable persons, sinful persons, damnable persons, justly driven out of paradise, justly excluded from heaven, justly condemned to hell fire, and yet, see

a wonderful token of God's love, he gave us his only begotten Son. Us, I say, that were his extreme and deadly enemies, that we, by virtue of his blood shed upon the cross, might be clean purged from our sins, and made righteous again in his sight.

Who can choose but marvel to hear that God should show such unspeakable love towards us, that were his deadly enemies? Indeed, O mortal man, thou oughtest a right to marvel at it, and to acknowledge therein God's great goodness and mercy towards mankind, which is so wonderful, that no flesh, be it never so worldly wise, may well conceive it or express it. For as St. Paul testifieth, God greatly commendeth and setteth out his love towards us, in that he sent his Son Christ to die for us, when we were yet sinners, and open enemies of his name. If we had in any manner of wise deserved it at his hands, then had it been no marvel at all, but there was no desert on our part, wherefore he should do it.

Therefore, thou sinful creature, when thou hearest that God gave his Son to die for the sins of the world, think not he did it for any desert or goodness that was in thee, for thou wast then the bond-slave of the devil. But fall down upon thy knees, and cry with the prophet David, O Lord, what is man, that thou art so mindful of him, or the Son of man, that thou so regardest him? And seeing he hath so greatly loved thee, endeavour thyself to love him again with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, that therein thou mayest appear not to be unworthy of his love. I report me to thy own conscience, whether thou wouldst not think thy love ill bestowed upon him that could not find in his heart to love thee again.

If this be true, as it is most true, then think how greatly it belongeth to thy duty to love God, which hath so greatly loved thee, that he hath not spared his own only Son from so cruel and shameful a death for thy sake. And hitherto concerning the cause of Christ's death and passion, which, as it was on our part, most horrible and grievous sin, so on the other side it was the free gift of God, proceeding of his mere and tender love towards mankind, without any merit or desert of our part. The Lord, for his mercy's sake, grant that we never forget this great benefit of our salvation in Christ Jesus, but that we always show ourselves thankful for it, abhorring all kind of wickedness and sin, and applying our minds wholly to the service of God and the diligent keeping of his commandments.

Now resteth to show unto you how to apply Christ's death and passion to our comfort, as a medicine to our wounds, so that it may work the same effect in us wherefore it was given, namely the health and salvation of our souls. For as it profiteth a man nothing to have solved, unless it be well applied to the part affected, so the death of Christ shall stand us in no force, unless we apply it to ourselves in such sort as God hath appointed. Almighty God commonly worketh by means, and in this thing he hath also ordained a certain mean, whereby we may take fruit and profit to our soul's health.

What mean is that? Forsooth it is faith, not an unconstant or wavering faith, but a sure,

steadfast, grounded and unfeigned faith. God sent his Son into the world, saith St John. To what end? That whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have life everlasting.

Mark these words, that whosoever believed in him, here is the mean whereby we must apply the fruits of Christ's death unto our deadly wound. Here is the mean whereby we must obtain eternal life, namely faith. For as St Paul teacheth in his epistle to the Romans, with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Paul, being demanded of the keeper of the prison, what he should do to be saved, made this answer. Believe in the Lord Jesus, so shalt thou and thine house be both saved. After the evangelist had described and set forth unto us at large the life and the death of the Lord Jesus, in the end he concludeth with these words.

These things are written, that we may believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, and through faith obtain eternal life. To conclude with the words of St Paul, which are these. Christ is the end of the law, and to salvation for every one that doth believe.

By this then, you may well perceive that the only mean and instrument of salvation required of our parts is faith. That is to say, a sure trust and confidence in the mercies of God, whereby we persuade ourselves that God both hath and will forgive our sins. That he hath accepted us again into his favour.

That he hath released us from the bonds of damnation, and received us again into the number of his elect people. Not for our merits or deserts, but only and solely for the merits of Christ's death and passion, who became man for our sakes, and humbled himself to sustain the reproach of the cross, that we thereby might be saved, and made inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. This faith is required at our hands, and this if we keep steadfastly in our hearts, there is no doubt, but we shall obtain salvation at God's hands.

As did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of whom the scripture saith that they believed, and it was imputed unto them for righteousness. Was it imputed unto them, and shall it not be imputed unto us? Yes, if we have the same faith as they had, it shall be as truly imputed unto us for righteousness, as it was unto them. For it is one faith that must save both us and them, even a sure and steadfast faith in Christ Jesus, who, as ye have heard, came into the world for this end, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have life everlasting.

But here we must take heed that we do not halt with God through an unconstant and wavering faith, but that it be strong and steadfast to our lives' end. He that wavereth, saith St. James, is like a wave of the sea, neither let that man think that he shall obtain anything at God's hands. Peter coming to Christ upon the water, because he fainted in

faith, was in danger of drowning.

So we, if we begin to waver or doubt, it is to be feared lest we shall sink, as Peter did, not into the water, but into the bottomless pit of hellfire. Therefore I say unto you that we must apprehend the merits of Christ's death and passion by faith, and that with a strong and steadfast faith, nothing doubting but that Christ, by his one oblation and once offering of himself upon the cross, hath taken away our sins, and hath restored us again into God's favour, so fully and perfectly, that no other sacrifice for sin shall hereafter be requisite or needful in all the world. Thus have ye heard in few words the mean whereby we must apply the fruits and merits of Christ's death unto us, so that it may work the salvation of our souls, namely assure steadfast, perfect, and grounded faith.

For as all they which beheld steadfastly the brazen serpent were healed and delivered, at the very sight thereof, from their corporal diseases and bodily stings, even so all they which behold Christ crucified with a true and lively faith shall undoubtedly be delivered from the grievous wounds of the soul, be they never so deadly, or many in number. Therefore, dearly beloved, if we chance at any time, through frailty of the flesh, to fall into sin, as it cannot be chosen but we must needs fall often, and if we feel the heavy burden thereof to press our souls, tormenting us with the fear of death, hell, and damnation, let us use that mean which God hath appointed in his word, to wit the mean of faith, which is the only instrument of salvation now left unto us. Let us steadfastly behold Christ crucified with the eyes of our heart.

Let us only trust to be saved by his death and passion, and to have our sins clean washed away through his most precious blood, that in the end of the world, when he shall come again to judge both the quick and the dead, he may receive us into his heavenly kingdom, and place us in the number of his elect and chosen people. Dare to be partakers of that immortal and everlasting life, which he hath purchased unto us by virtue of his bloody wounds. To him, therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end.

Amen.