

**THE
COVENANT
ENFORCED**

Sermons on Deuteronomy 27 and 28

by
John Calvin

Edited by
James B. Jordan

Institute for Christian Economics
Tyler, Texas

profit from it. And when He spares us, let us not abuse His patience. And since the means to reconcile us to Him is to accept the promise that He offers us in the gospel, let us embrace our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our peace, to the end that we may be entreated after a fatherly fashion at the hands of our God.

Prayer

Now let us fall down before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledgment of our sins, beseeching Him to make us to perceive them better and better, and to bear with us in such a way that His chastisements and corrections may be so fatherly and measured toward us that we may be reduced to the obedience of His righteousness. Let us pray that He evermore comfort us, so that we may have the ability to rejoice in Him and to glorify Him for His procuring of our salvation by all available means. And so let us all say, "Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc."

GOD OUR FORTRESS

**Sermon 161. Thursday, 26 March 1556.
Deuteronomy 28:49-58.**

49. The LORD shall bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you will not understand,

50. A nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old or show favor to the young.

51. Moreover, they shall eat the fruit of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also shall leave you no grain, new wine, or oil, or the increase of your herd, or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish.

52. And it shall besiege you in all your gates until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your gates throughout your land that the LORD your God has given you.

53. Then you shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will distress you.

53. The man who is so tender and very delicate among you, his eye shall be evil toward his brother and toward the wife of his bosom and toward the rest of his children who remain,

55. So that he will not give one of them any of the flesh of his children that he will eat (since he has nothing else left) during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will distress you in all your gates.

56. The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom and toward her son and daughter,

57. And toward her afterbirth that issues from between her feet and toward her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of anything, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy shall distress you in your gates.

58. If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God. . . .¹

We must remember what we touched on yesterday, which Moses continues to speak of here, that if men are rough and cruel toward us, it is God who stirs them up to it because He has found us rebellious towards Him. And therefore, whenever men fail to deal with us in as mild a manner as we wish, let us look to see whether we have responded to God, and whether we have meekly embraced all that He has commanded us. For if any of us finds himself to have made war against God, by setting himself up against Him, it is not to be wondered at if God pays him back with the same, using men as His instruments.

But we shall never be persuaded of this doctrine unless we understand that God holds the hearts of men in His hand; to soften them when it pleases Him, be they never so hard-hearted; and to harden them, though they formerly bore us never so much good will. Let us not therefore trust to the love of men, unless we walk in the fear of God. For He has the ability to change their hearts, so that they bear rancor toward us and completely with-

1. This verse actually begins the next paragraph of Deuteronomy 28. Calvin isolates it, however, and preaches on it in the second half of this sermon.

draw themselves from us for less than nothing, so that the world will see that those who were most forward to help us, now become most against us.

And, the reverse of this, let us understand that our Lord can easily transform all malice. Indeed, though they be as fierce as lions, He shall make them mild and friendly toward us. There was never a nation as proud and cruel as the Egyptians. In particular, we see how spiteful they were against the children of Israel. It seemed that this poor people would never find any mercy. And yet God wrought in such a way that the Egyptians gave them all their treasures and all that was fine in their houses. Neither gold nor silver was spared. And how did this come about? Because they had held the Jews in bondage and had vexed them exceedingly. They would have plucked the bread out of their mouths, and would have cut the throats of them all. A little earlier, they had killed their children as soon as they came out of their mothers' wombs, intending to destroy the entire race of them. And now, how does it come about that they are suddenly mild, and every man brings them those things that were most precious in his house? It is because God converted their hearts.

And returning to the other side, it is said that God hardened the hearts of kings when the people were to enter into the land of Canaan (Josh. 11:20). They should have been allowed to pass, but there were many who opposed them. How did that come about? It was because they [Israel, apparently — ed.] had resisted their God.

Let us therefore learn (as I have said before) so to behave ourselves in obedience to God that men also on their parts will be friendly towards us. For there is no one so great or mighty that he can avoid the misery that will rise up against him when he resists and strives against God. And we have seen that those who are drunk with their own greatness must in the end be punished, and not by those who are in authority or who are high in the estimation of men, but by riff-raff and dissolute persons; they will spit in their faces. And we have seen such happen even to princes, and to other men of great estate. For when they will

not yield themselves to be governed by God, He is willing to stir up governors to the contrary, to shame such as will not be obedient to Him. Yet notwithstanding, when men refuse to yield themselves tractable, then we must understand that God is overseeing the matter in a secret manner, and that He does it in order to make us bow.

Therefore, let us not deceive ourselves by means of mere creatures, saying, "What fortune is this?" Indeed, we may say so, but we must go further and understand that nothing comes to pass without the direction of God. And understanding this, we must come to the remedy, which is that we must bow under the word and hand of God. And we must consider that if it pleases Him, He can turn the minds of men that were spiteful against us, and make them become friendly toward us. And this is something more than necessary. For when we have to do with those who are rough and intractable, we by and by lose heart, and wish to rid ourselves of all trouble, if possible, and that at the first dash. But, we should rather return unto God, acknowledging that those things proceed from His hand.

And so, when men show themselves so unfaithful and cruel toward us, handling us scornfully and wickedly, so that we cannot get one ounce of right or reason at their hands; when we see how their entire program is to get their feet on our throats, and that they have such a beastly shamelessness (as it is said here) that they are not ashamed of anything that is said to them; when we see that they take the bridle in their teeth and act like wild beasts so that there is neither grace nor honesty in them; when we see such barbarous beastishness, let us learn to resort to our God, and to acknowledge that we deserve to be tamed by Him. Moreover, the only way to appease such fury, and to assuage those who are hot and hasty, is to call upon our God, and to pray Him to touch inwardly by His Holy Spirit those who are so cruel and who are simply unable to do us any good because we have set up ourselves against our God. That is what we are admonished about in this text.

Sudden and Swift Enemies

Now Moses repeats something touched upon earlier, which is that God shall bring us enemies from a far country, and that they will be like eagles (v. 49). We should not think that God needs to make any preparations long beforehand. If a man should threaten us, we would look to see whether he had a sword in his hand, and whether he is ready to execute what he has threatened. But if God but whistles (as He says in the prophets), immediately He has His men of war in readiness. He does not need to muster them, or enroll them, or pound the drum. He needs none of this. At His mere whistle (for He uses this similitude) all the whole earth must needs be moved. Therefore, let us not look to see whether or not things are in readiness, or whether or not any hurt or harm may be done to us. Let us not look whether any worldly means have been prepared. But let us understand that before we can even conceive what evil might happen to us, we shall be overthrown.

And why? Because it is God who speaks. He makes men to fly like birds, even from one end of the earth to the other. Neither sea nor mountain is able to save us from the experience of what we never believed could happen. God has so ordered things, and even among the heathen is often seen an incredible swiftness when God is disposed to chastise the greatest part of the world. So much so that some one man has risen up with a small number of people to chastise an infinite multitude that did set themselves against Him. And that not for one time only, but twice or thrice, one after another; sacking towns and fortresses that seemed to be so well appointed and strong by reason of natural situation that they could not be approached unto, and yet they have been sacked as if God had meant to renew a great part of the world. It has been likewise seen that a people without renown or estimation have risen up and made the most mighty to tremble.

And thus God gives examples of what is written here, which is that He can surely bring our enemies upon us suddenly, and they shall make such dispatch that they will come swifter than the post. And when we suppose that we have some respite by truce,

for one month or one year or even a whole lifetime, we shall be suddenly surprised in a morning before we can think upon it. Let us therefore understand that as soon as God speaks, we must have an eye to His infinite power (which is incredible to man's understanding), so that we tremble at His very word and yield to Him, knowing well that if we delay from day to day, we may be prevented from doing so, and it will then be too late. Let us therefore be advised to humble ourselves in due time, and to crave pardon when we have offended Him.

No Shelters From God's Wrath

Moses says expressly that those who are disobedient to God shall be besieged and shut up within their walls until their fortresses in which they trusted are beaten down (v. 52). Here we see how God reproveth the false and cursed presumption whereby men deceive themselves, thinking that they are well protected against Him. It is a sacrilege whereby God is robbed of His honor, when we attribute to the creation the means of our defense. It is certain that God serves Himself by means, and we must also apply them to our own use, but to settle our *trust* upon them is to rob God of His majesty. For He will have us to maintain that all things are His, and to do Him homage for them.

So then, it is an intolerable presumption for us to put our trust in creatures and to ground ourselves upon them, and yet there is no fault more common in all the world. We can say well enough that it is not lawful, and that we ought not to do it, but meanwhile everyone does it. Now, let us remember ourselves, for there is nothing that God holds more dear or whereof He makes greater account than His honor. Neither is it sufficient for us to leave Him the mere title and name of God. He must be known as He is; that is to say, that all power lies in Him; that He is the fountain of all manner of grace and goodness; that it is His proper office to maintain and preserve us; that our life is in His hand along with all things that pertain thereto. When we have thought well upon this, let us take order to gather our wits about us, so that we are not grounded upon creatures.

Surely the mischief is doubled when we shield ourselves with the creatures against God, and thereby become stubborn when He threatens us, holding on still when he utters forth tokens of His displeasure. Let us consider that the offense is then much more grievous. Yet, this is exceedingly common. For while we do not perceive any danger toward us from the world, do we not continue in our sins? And do we not abide in stubbornness? God speaks, but we regard Him not. If men favor us, and if we have the means to fortify ourselves, we think that the hand of God cannot come at us. And therefore it is with good reason that our Lord reproveth the wickedness of all such as are disobedient towards Him; that is to say, they that put their trust in their fortresses, in their high walls, in their munitions, and in such like things.

Now, since we are subject to these things, it were better for us if we have neither hedge nor anything else, than to be well fenced with walls and bulwarks. For they serve but to blind our eyes, when we have no more respect for our God, but are bewitched by Satan to put our trust in things that will be our confusion. However the case stands, let us advisedly hold this rule in general; that is, that God be our fortress always, as we see He promises in His prophet Isaiah in the twelfth chapter and also chapters 55 to the end, for that whole section turns on this point. Indeed, it is so common a teaching in the Holy Scripture that we can scarcely turn a leaf but we shall see some text in which God tells us that He will be our ramparts, our walls, our moats, indeed double moats, our towers, and whatever else is necessary for our defense. And why? Because (as I have said before), our minds rapidly slide into vanity so that God is not able to hold us back to Himself, and to count on our putting our whole trust in Him.

What must we then do? First of all, if we are destitute of human aid, let us bear in mind that God by Himself is sufficient, if we return to Him: "Ah, Lord, it is certain that we are the prey of men, and we do not have the wherewithal to save ourselves, for all the world fails us; but yet it is enough that You are our succor." After that manner should we learn to resort to Him. And

thus we should take occasion to yield ourselves wholly to Him when the things of this world fail us.

And by the way [secondly], although we have walls and artillery, money and munitions, and all that we can wish for, yea and people also, and all things else; yet let us understand that we must meanwhile so use them that our Lord may be always our trust, and we give Him always this honor: that it is His office to defend us, and that we not wade in any deeper than this. It is certain that we may serve our turn with the things that He puts into our hands, but our hearts and minds must always be raised up above all the world, and He alone must be our Sheet-anchor.²

Thirdly, we must not put our trust in the power of the help that He gives us, for as they say, a thorn of a bramble is enough to make us believe that we are invincible. "What?" we say, "Is it possible that they should prevail against us?" All this is nothing; not even the peel of an onion as they say.³ Yet we have to strain our wits in order to give it price and glory. Rather let us acknowledge our weakness and increpitude, that we may repair to God. And let nothing hinder us from yielding ourselves wholly unto Him and unto His protection. Let us not deceive ourselves with such vain confidence, as the Jews had in their high walls.

Human Shelters, Human Traps

Now with all this he also shows that whatever we may devise for our own strength and security, it will be impotent in the face of His power, and we shall continue to be besieged until we are totally wasted. Indeed, we may gather from this text that it would be much better for us to be delivered into the hands of our enemies from the first, than to have the means to resist. [Shut up in the siege] we are made so to languish that we are not permitted a simple and clean death. The poor folk who are abroad in the

2. From the *Oxford English Dictionary*: A large anchor, formerly always the largest of a ship's anchors, used only in an emergency. *Fig.*: That on which one places one's reliance when everything else has failed.

3. In other words, our human fortresses are as diaphanous as the outer, paper-like skin of an onion.

fields are struck at the very first, and are dispatched. Surely they are in a piteous state, with their throats cut and all their possessions set on fire, but all the same, by such means they are delivered from their miseries so that they do not pine away in suffering. But those who are in strong towns have to abide a long siege. They must languish and pine away piecemeal, not for a mere month or two, but until they can no longer hold out. The result is as if they should die a hundred deaths.

Thus does our Lord avenge Himself on those who think that they have escaped when God does not root them out at the first. "No," He says, "think about this. Which fruits are preferable? Those that are brought to the market in their prime and are eaten immediately, or those that are kept for a time and eventually rot? It were better then for you to be overcome and vanquished by your enemies at the first." Let us therefore consider well that when we have the means to defend ourselves against the world, where it ought to profit us, it will turn to our double confusion if we place our trust in it. We shall groan a great while under the burden, and be wasted little by little. For when we are disobedient and refuse to be reformed, our Lord will not let us go until He has utterly destroyed us, as He shows here so many times in this passage.

Cannibalism

This is brought home by what Moses adds in verse 54, that the man who is so tender and very delicate among you shall be grieved at his brother and at the wife who lies in his arms, because they shall demand a share of his children when he eats them. The woman who is so particular that she will not touch the ground with her bare feet (such are the words of Moses), shall seek to destroy and spoil her own children. Indeed, they shall no sooner be born out of her womb than she will desire to devour them, and if she has raised them to a larger size, she will still not spare them. These are dreadful things. For it is not simply said, "You shall be besieged, and remain a long time in famine, so that you will be driven to eat horses, rats, mice, shoe leather, and the very

manure of birds (as it is said in 2 Kings 6:25), and all these things will be your meat." Nor is it said that men and women should be eaten, but that every man will eat his own children.

When God speaks this way it should make our hair stand upright. And in fact, everything here declared by Moses eventually came to pass. Let no man say, "This is not credible; it is repugnant to nature. A man would pluck the bread out of his own mouth when he is in extremity, in order to give it to his children. He would die to help them, just as we see that Hagar could not abide to see the death of her child, but left him alone and wished for her own death." But we don't need to get into an argument over such things, for the common affection of humanity sufficiently shows that any man would rather die than eat his own children. Yet, such cruelty was shown among the Jews. They who had been instructed in the law of God, and should have had much more humanity and compassion than the pagans and infidels, even they forgot all manner of true living and were overcome by this madness. It was fitting that this blindness, of which the prophets also spoke and which we see here already mentioned by Moses, should come to pass in them and that they should lose their minds. For when God takes away all reason and uprightness from men, then He leaves them to a kind of madness. Such fury must have been in them, for them to eat their own children.

By this we are particularly warned that those who are set aside for the last judgment are in no better situation than those whom God chastises long before. And this is a profitable warning. For as soon as God strikes some and leaves others alone, we want to know why. Weren't they equally deserving? We do not have the patience to allow God to execute His judgments in the order that seems good to Himself, but we surmise that those whom He leaves alone, and whom He forbears for a little while, are privileged more than we are. But it is the other way around. It would have been better for them to have been punished earlier than to be thus reserved for the end. And therefore, let us not envy those whom God forbears for a time, as though they were exempt from all plagues, but let us wait until God fetches them about at their

time; for it would have been far better for them if they had been dispatched out of hand.

And with all of this let us every one look to himself. Let us not trust in the patience that God uses towards us, deceiving ourselves therewith. Indeed, when God has been patient and forbore us, it should give us a better disposition to resort to Him, and to hope to find Him merciful to forgive us our faults and trespasses. But we must not fall asleep therein, to dally with Him and to say, "O well, He has waited this long to deal with us. He will continue to wait some more." We see the wicked thinking this way. They don't worry, for when they see that God has spared them, they think that they are discharged. Let us beware of that. For we see how he says that when we are well appointed, and have fortresses as it were invincible, all must fall down on our heads, and we shall be so much the more grievously punished. This much we have to bear in mind from this text.

Now let us mark further that when we forget our God, we must also forget all the course of nature, and He finds it proper to strip us of our wits. For it is He on whom all human fatherhood depends; He is the wellspring of it. We would not know what the duties of parents toward their children are, or what reverence children owe to their parents and superiors, except for the fact that God is sovereign leader in this. If we do not refer all to Him, He shall make us to become idiotic, so that we will not understand what this fatherly affection toward our children should mean. This much for one point.

But we also have to note that those men who did so devour their own children were not so blockish as to be bereft of terrible heart pangs. They were vexed with furious fearfulness, that made them abhor what they did. It is true that they were carried away by force, and had no reason in them; but yet for all that, they had certain secret stings and prickings inwardly, and God held them as it were upon the rack of torture, as if He were saying to them, "What will you do, wretched creature? It would have been better for you to have been born before your time, and for the earth to have swallowed you up a hundred times, than that you should

have committed so terrible a deed. All the same, necessity gets the upper hand with you." Let us mark therefore, that when we are not made meek under the hand of God, we must then fall into such a blockishness as will overmaster us and make us torment ourselves without the help of any other executioner, so that every one of us will execute God's vengeance upon himself, which vengeance he had earlier scorned and scoffed at.

I have said that there is nothing here mentioned that has not come to pass, to wit that fathers have eaten their children, and also have mothers (2 Kings 6:29; Lam. 4:10). But in that the Jews had most exceedingly provoked God, even so they came to the fullness of iniquity, and consequently it behooved God so to utter His wrath toward them with extremity, that it was seen when they were besieged by their enemies. For then did they eat pigeons' dung, buying it by gold weight. You will see that they committed acts against nature by eating one another. But when they had once rejected the Son of God, and had utterly cut themselves off from the hope of salvation by forsaking the Redeemer upon whom were grounded all the promises that had been made unto them concerning the goodness of God; then it was necessary that those things should be the more accomplished. For if you read the histories, even of those who were of that same nation, and which were present witnesses of the matter, you would think that you heard dreams or fables; and yet for all that, those things were then notoriously known, and noted to be true, and God intended as it were to set up scaffolds, that it might be seen how His threats directed against His people were not in vain, as we see, and that all men should take example thereat.⁴

For they are horrible things, and such as should make our hairs stand upright, when it is said that the husband shall deceive the wife and steal away the children that issued from their two bodies, and that the wife also shall seek some secret place to cut the throat of her child, as if to say, "I will set this aside for

4. The reference is to Josephus's accounts of the devastation of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

myself." And both the husbands and the wives should be so mad as to say, "I will eat my own child." Seeing that all these things were accomplished, and that our Lord has executed such vengeance, let us understand that we ought not to read these things at this day without trembling, for it is even as if God should lay forth His previously uttered vengeance before us on a silver platter. Moreover, let us understand that when God had pronounced such sentence against the Jews, it was not executed at the first day. For He waited for them with long patience, so that it seemed that no mischief should light upon them. But when the sore was burst, then was the rottenness perceived that lay hidden before, and the disease was the more deadly. Also let us mark that if God does bear with us, and afterwards He corrects us in various ways, and yet does not strike so roughly as to come to extremity, we must not think that we have thereby escaped His hand, but we must return to Him, and not tarry till He sees our disobedience to be unreformable, and so finds it needful to proceed to the extremity of His threatenings. Thus much have we to remember touching this text.

The Fearfulness of God

Now finally Moses says, "if you do not keep all the words of this law to do them, and if you do not fear this dreadful and glorious name, the Lord your God. . . ." It certainly seems at first glance that what Moses requires of men is beyond measure, that it is not in their power, for who is he that can fulfill all the law of God? And again, though a man miss in some certain points, should God use such rigor? I have told you before that he directs this speech towards those that are wholly given over to evil, and to such as are despisers of God, who break His law by every means they can. To what end, then, does he require such perfection?

Let us first of all mark that God will not have His law chopped into pieces and sections, for He is setting forth His righteousness unto us in it. Men therefore must not chop things up at their own pleasure, as if to say, "I will, for God's honor,

abstain from whoredom, but I will steal if I please; I will abstain from murder, but I will be a blasphemer." No, but seeing that He who forbids us to rob has also forbidden us to kill, and He who has forbidden fornication has in like manner forbidden blasphemy, let us learn to obey Him in all points and in all respects. Let us restrain our senses and bridle our affections, and to be short, let us come to the point to give ourselves wholly to the service of our God. That is what we ought to do, and that is what Moses is speaking of here. For if we miss in any one point, we are accursed of God, and deserve the rigor here mentioned.

Nevertheless, He of His mercy does not cease to bear with us. Yea, and He will never use the great severity that is spoken of here, but towards such as set themselves altogether stubbornly against Him. Yet notwithstanding, it is with good reason that Moses here exhorts the Jews to the perfect observation of the law. A physician prescribing an order does not permit his patient to eat whatever he wants, or to do anything amiss at all, no matter how little it seems, but he says, "I will have you to do such and such." Now if the sick man were to step aside to the slightest degree, very well, he is not yet incurable, the physician will still have care of him. But if he overturns everything, and casts off all order, and plays the madman, well, he will have payment as he deserves. In like manner will our Lord have us at His commandment in all cases, and for good reason.

Even so, there is such great infirmity (I mean even in those who are governed by the Holy Spirit, and who strain themselves to be obedient unto Him) that they fail in many respects, but yet however the world may go, sin never overpowers them, for they do not strive to transgress the law, but proceed forward, and even though they do it limpingly, yet they keep on moving toward God. And concerning these infirmities, they are borne along withal. It is true that God will chastise them, and in what manner? Even in forgiving them, according to this saying of His, "I will visit their iniquities, but it will be with the rod of men, and not with extremity. I will not deal with them as with enemies. I will not take away My mercy from them, although I correct them." Thus

does God deal in that way. But if our hearts are utterly hardened, then will He war upon us, and destroy us without sparing, and even though He bears with us, yet will all turn to our confusion. That is one thing that we have to remember concerning this text.

It is also a notable point to be observed, where Moses speaks of the yoke of iron. For he says (v. 48) that the Lord shall lay a yoke of iron upon the neck of all unbelievers until they are wholly consumed. And that is to the end that we should learn to receive the corrections He sends and not kick against them. For we see what happened to Hananiah when he mocked at the threats of Jeremiah (Jer. 28), and tried to break the yoke that he had upon his neck, which was a yoke of wood and cords. The prophet wore that yoke to move the people to consider that they should all become captives, and so to behold their own state in the person of Jeremiah. Now this wicked one that was possessed by the devil (to make the Word of God to be ignored) came to break the yoke from Jeremiah, and said, "Even thus shall God break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar; and even if he besiege you, and do what he can to carry you away captives into a strange land, yet shall you be preserved by the grace of your God." God threatened, and this fellow mocked all His threats, and for that purpose took the shadow of the name of God, and abused the people. Well then, what did he win by such rebellion? It was said to the prophet Jeremiah, "Take a yoke of iron" (Jer. 28:14), for whereas the bondage should have been gentle and tolerable, it must now be so cruel, that they will not be able to endure it. See here how He deals with all such as harden their hearts against Him, and refuse to abide and be meekened by His hand.

So then, let us be afraid of this yoke of iron. First of all, we know that God's yoke is amiable to all such as willingly yield themselves to it, and allow themselves to be governed by the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the testimony of the Son of God, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Come to Me, and learn that I am lowly and meek." Seeing that our Lord Jesus declares that those who are teachable and obedient will perceive that there is neither burden nor weight nor grief in His yoke, to

overpower them, it ought to move us to yield our necks unto it and to pray God to put us under it, and also to permit Him to chastise us when we have offended Him. Indeed, the strokes will be grievous to us, as the apostle says, and we shall never find the corrections pleasant during the time that God strikes us (Heb. 12). We are like little children when they are corrected; we feel it grievous, because our nature cries out against it. But whether we like it or not, God will use that fatherly means, and little by little teach us to return unto Him. But if we find it necessary to try His patience to the uttermost, He must then use the iron rod to break our heads with it, as it is said in Psalm 2. We shall be driven to feel the iron that will serve, not to reclaim us, but to break us in pieces and to confound us utterly. And justly, for we have heard what is said here, "If you will not fear the glorious and dreadful name of the Lord your God."

Where does this despising and contempt of all good doctrine come from, and our boldness in sinning, if not from this, that we are deaf to all admonitions? Indeed, if we could yield ourselves obedient to our God with a good heart and a good affection, and abide at that point continually, we should no sooner hear these threats but we should consider thus, "Alas, do we not deserve a grievous curse at God's hand, seeing we have thus striven against Him?" We see then that all the evil deeds and disobedience that are committed spring from ignorance and contempt of God, in that we have failed to regard His majesty. Certainly this kind of stubbornness is not always directly of set purpose and determined malice, but yet there is such rudeness in us that we do not yield such a reverence to God as is requisite, nor do we render the obedience whereby we should endeavor to submit ourselves to His Word.

And because we are so dull-headed that nothing can quicken us up, when we are called upon to submit ourselves to God, Moses says expressly, "this dreadful name, this glorious name," which is "the Lord, your God." Where he says, "The Lord," which is "the eternal, the everlasting,"⁵ that term imports all glory

5. In French, the word "LORD" is rendered "the Eternal." The translation is based on the meaning of "I am that I am."

and majesty, and therefore ought to ravish us with wonder. Indeed, for we should not have this name of God so that we can use it coldly, so as to say "God, God," as they do who have it continually in their lips, and afterwards let it vanish as though it were a thing of nothing. But we must join both together thus: God, even the same that created us, the same that holds all things in His hand, the same that is honored by the angels, the same that is of glory infinite, the very same whom all the principalities of heaven cannot abide, at the sight of whom all manner of creatures must be fain to cast down their eyes, even the same which with one word alone can make all the earth to tremble, the same that can remove mountains with His mere blast, the same that gives being to all manner of creatures, finally the same that maintains and governs all things and orders all things well, righteously, and with wisdom; the same it is who speaks to us.

And so you see after what manner we use the words of Moses, where he says, "The Lord your God, He it is who speaks to you." Let us therefore hear Him speak, in such a way that His majesty may possess all our wits, and that thereby we may be so humbled under the same that when we have worshipped Him, we may so remain under His hand that we allow ourselves to be governed by Him to follow the rule that He has delivered to us.

Prayer

Now let us fall down before the judgment seat of our God, acknowledging the infinite faults of which we are guilty, if He inclined to execute the office of a judge against us; and with all this let us pray Him not to fail to be a Father to us for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. And that since we are guilty of many offenses, we may allow ourselves to be daily cut off from our sins, so that nothing may hinder our coming to Him to yield ourselves in such a way to Him that we may renounce all our wicked affections more and more until we are thoroughly rid of them and are clothed with His heavenly righteousness. And so let us all say, "Almighty God, heavenly Father, etc."