

## Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

Of the Supreme Dominion of Jurisdiction Which God Has Over His Creatures.—(Continued.)

But (2) we must further consider that God, by His Almighty power, not only created us, but He still continues, by the same Almighty power, every moment to preserve us; inasmuch, that should He withdraw His hand from us for an instant, that instant we should immediately return to our primitive nothing: for as the light of the day so essentially depends upon the sun, that if the sun should cease to shine, that instant light would cease to exist, so we, and all we have, so essentially depend upon the continual preservation of God, that the moment He should cease to preserve us, we should cease to be: for "He upholdeth all things by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3). "By Him all things consist" (Col. i. 17). And "how could anything endure," says the wise man to God, "if Thou wouldst not? or be preserved, if not called by Thee?" (Wisd. xi 26). God is a self-existent, necessary, and indefectible being, perfectly sufficient for himself, and absolutely independent of any other: but we, and all creatures, have no being of ourselves—we are nothing, and of ourselves always tend to nothing, and continually depend upon Him for our very existence. How immensely does this increase our subjection to Him, and our strict obligation to serve and obey Him? And as we wholly depend upon Him for our existence, so we equally depend upon Him for everything else without exception. It is God "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth: Who maketh grass to grow on the mountains, and herbs for the service of man: Who giveth to beasts their food, and to the young ravens who call upon Him" (Ps. cxlvi. 8). And therefore, "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season: Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with Thy blessing every living creature" (Ps. cxlv. 15). "What Thou givest to them, they shall gather up: when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall all be filled with good: but if Thou turnest away Thy face, they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust" (Ps. ciii. 28). See here what an immense dependence we have upon God for everything, and consequently how immense our obligation is to serve and obey Him. Nay, whatever powers or faculties we have, whether of soul or body, are all the work of the great God: they are given us by Him—He can take them from us when He pleases, and they so essentially depend upon Him, that without His concurrence we could not exercise them—no, not for a moment: "Without Me," says Jesus Christ, "you can do nothing" (John xv.); not so much as think a thought, nor speak a word, nor move either hand or foot. If a house be once built by the builder, it stands in no further need of the workman's hand for its preservation: if the seed be once thrown into the ground, it stands in no further need of the sower for its growth, and the production of its fruit: if a watch be once finished by the workman, and wound up, it suffices by itself to continue its motion; but we have such an absolute dependence upon the Hand that made us, that we can neither exist, nor increase, nor act, nor move, without His continual conservation and assistance. Who can conceive the extent of this total dependence we have on Him? Judge then how immense our obligation must be to serve and obey Him!

Yet this is not all: for (3) the very end for which we have our being—the design that God had in creating us, and for which He made and preserves us, is to serve and obey Him. Our Blessed Saviour says of Himself: "I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38). And it is no less true of us, that we were created by Almighty God, and are placed by Him in this world, not to do our own will, but the will of Him that created us. God created this world and all things in it, not out of any necessity, nor through force, but out of His own free choice, because He was pleased to do so, and for such ends and uses as He thought proper to assign to every creature, that all might concur, in their respective spheres, to this ultimate

and supreme end, to give Him pleasure and glory. "Every one," says He, "that calleth upon My name, I have created him for my glory" (Is. xlii. 2). And every creature promotes this glory of the Creator, by faithfully performing those effects for which He made them. Thus the sun was created to glorify God by giving light and heat; the water by serving to cool and refresh; the earth by producing nourishment to man and beast; and man was created to glorify God, by serving and obeying Him. This is the very end of his being; he has no existence but for this purpose. But what an infinite obligation does this lay him under to comply with his end! How indispensable is his duty to serve and obey his Creator! Whatever is destined for any particular end, and for that alone; if either it does not, or cannot, comply with that end, is good for nothing—is to no purpose at all. If the sun should cease to give light and heat—the water to cool and refresh, and the earth to produce meat for man and beast, what would be the use of them? to what purpose would they serve? they might as well not be at all. So man, if he refuse to serve and obey God, is good for nothing; whatever he does else, is to no purpose; he is like an abortive—a mere nuisance in the eyes of his Creator. And on the other hand, as every thing is the more perfect in its kind, and the more excellent and valuable, the more perfectly it accomplishes the end of its being; so the more perfectly man complies with the noble end for which he is created, by serving and obeying God, the more excellent and perfect he is; and hence the wise man, after a long discourse on the ways of man, draws this conclusion, "Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is all man" (Eccles. xii. 13); that is his whole business—his whole duty—his highest perfection—his only happiness—*his all!*

Add to all this, (4) The absolute necessity we all lie under of complying with this end of our being, by serving and obeying God, seeing otherwise it is impossible for us to escape the dismal effects of His justice and vengeance: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 1); that is, for His own pleasure and glory; this is the great, the supreme, the ultimate end which the Almighty has in view in all His works; and in the accomplishment of this, it is impossible He should be ever disappointed; to this great end we must all unavoidably contribute, whether we will or not, for endless eternities; we can no more be dispensed with in this, than we can cease to be creatures; but here lies the great, the dreadful difference—if we cheerfully comply with the immediate end of our being in this life, by carefully serving Him and keeping His commandments, we shall be happy for all eternity, in the enjoyment of God Himself in heaven, glorifying His infinite goodness and mercy; but if we refuse to serve and obey Him here, we shall be condemned to the eternal torments of hell hereafter, there for ever to exalt and glorify His justice. One of the two must unavoidably be our fate; glorify Him we must, whether we will or not; and there is no escaping this alternative of glorifying Him, either in heaven as trophies of His mercy, or in hell as victims of His eternal vengeance: by serving and obeying Him here we shall secure the former; but if we disobey His holy commandments here, the latter must be our fate for ever! For God is a "God whose wrath no man can resist, and under whom they stoop that bear up the world" (Job ix. 13). "Thou art terrible," says David to Him, "and who can resist Thee from the time that Thy wrath shall break out? Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still" (Ps. lxxxv). Neither is it possible for sinners to fly from His avenging justice. "There shall be no flight for them," says God Himself, "and I will slay the last of them with the sword. They shall flee, and he that shall flee of them, shall not be delivered. Though they go down even to hell, thence shall My hand bring them out; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they be hid in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them away from thence: and though they hide themselves from My eyes in the depths of the sea, there will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them; and if they go into captivity before their enemies, there will I command the sword, and it shall kill them. And I will set my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good" (Amos ix. 1). Oh! how terrible it is to fall into the hands of this avenging God! How great, then, our obligation to serve and obey him!

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