

## PART III.

### ON THE MEANS OF GRACE.

#### ON GRACE IN GENERAL.

1. Can we, by our own natural strength, keep the Commandments and be saved?

No; we cannot, without the grace of God.

'Without me you can do nothing,' says Christ (John xv. 5). 'I will put my Spirit in the midst of you, and I will cause you to walk in my commandments' (Ez. xxxvi. 27).

2. What do we understand by the grace of God?

By the grace of God we understand here an internal supernatural help or gift, which God communicates to us, through the merits of Jesus Christ, for our eternal salvation.

3. How many kinds of this supernatural help and gift, or of *Grace* properly so called, are there?

There are two kinds, 1. The *grace of assistance*, called also *actual* or *transient* grace; and 2. The *grace of sanctification* or *justification*, called also *sanctifying* or *habitual* grace.

The *grace of assistance* is called *actual* and *transient*, because it *acts transiently* upon the soul, whereas the *grace of sanctification* or *justification* *remains habitually* in the soul, beautifies it, and makes it *holy* and *just* in the eyes of God.

#### § 1. On the Grace of Assistance.

4. In what does *Actual Grace*, or the *Grace of Assistance*, consist?

*Actual Grace* consists in this: that God enlightens our understanding, and inclines our will to avoid evil, and both to will and to do what is good.

'Give me understanding, and I will search Thy law, and I will keep it with my whole heart. . . . Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies,' etc. (Ps. cxviii. 34, 36).

5. How far is the assistance of grace necessary to us?

It is so necessary to us that, without the grace of God, we can neither begin, continue, nor accomplish the least thing towards our salvation.

'For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish' (Philip. ii. 13).

6. Why is grace so indispensable to everything that relates to salvation?

1. Because eternal salvation is a good of a supernatural order, and, consequently, can be obtained only by a supernatural power and help—that is, by grace;  
2. Because by grace alone we enter into connection with Christ, and partake of His infinite merits, which are the source of everything that leads to salvation.

1. 'Not that we are sufficient to think anything [conducive to salvation] of ourselves, as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God' (2 Cor. iii. 5). 2. 'I cast not away the grace of God; for if justice be by the law, then Christ died in vain' (Gal. ii. 21); *i.e.*, if the observance of the law alone, without being united by grace with Christ, did justify us, or lead us to eternal salvation, it would not have been necessary for Christ to die in order to merit salvation for us.

By this, however, it is not meant that man is naturally quite incapable of performing any action that is morally good, but only that by such morally good actions as proceed from his naturally good will he can neither merit, nor in any way obtain, grace or salvation; by them he can only prepare himself for grace, in so far as he does not, by bad actions, still increase the obstacles of it. 'No man can come to me,' says Christ, 'unless it be given him by my Father' (John vi. 66).

7. Does God give His grace to all men?

Yes; God gives to all men sufficient grace to enable them to keep, as they are in duty bound, the Commandments, and to work out their salvation.

'The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost' (Matt. xviii. 11). 'God will have all men to be saved, and to come to

the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. ii. 4). 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it' (1 Cor. x. 13). 'God does not command impossibilities; but, when commanding, He admonishes us to do what we are able, and to pray for what we are not able to do, and aids us, that we may be able' (Counc. of Trent, Sess. 6, Ch. xiv.)

8. But what must we do on our part, in order that the grace of God may conduce to our salvation?

We must not resist it, but faithfully co-operate with it.

'We exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God *in vain*' (2 Cor. vi. 1). God stretches forth His hand to save us; if we really wish to be saved, we must take hold of it, and not reject it.—Example of St. Paul: 'I have labored more abundantly than all they; yet not I, but the grace of God with me' (1 Cor. xv. 10).

9. Is it, then, also in our power to resist the grace of God?

Most certainly; for God's grace does not force the human will, but leaves it perfectly free.

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not!' (Matt. xxiii. 37). 'To-day, if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts' (Ps. xciv. 8).

*Application.* Pray daily to God to give you His grace, and take particular care not to close your heart against it. 'Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me' (Apoc. iii. 20). In order to make His grace operate the more easily in the human heart, God often connects it with exterior events; as sudden death, diseases, good and bad fortune. Do not heedlessly disregard such divine warnings; for nothing is more dangerous than not to know the time of the visitation of God.—Example: Jerusalem (Luke xix. 44).

§ 2. *On the Grace of Sanctification or Justification.*

10. What is Sanctifying Grace?

Sanctifying Grace is a gratuitous supernatural gift, which the Holy Ghost communicates to our souls, and by which from sinners we are made just, children of God, and heirs of Heaven.

Together with sanctifying grace 'the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us' (Rom. v. 5). With it God enters into our hearts, according to the words of Jesus: 'If any one love me, my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him' (John xiv. 23). Through it we are born again children of God, and our soul receives supernatural life: 'Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God' (1 John iii. 1; comp. pp. 126, 127, quest. 6, 7, 8, 12, 13).

11. Why is sanctifying grace called '*a gratuitous gift*'?

Because it is an entirely free gift, flowing from the compassionate love of God.

'For all have sinned, and do need the glory of God; being justified freely [*i.e.*, without their desert] by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (Rom. iii. 23, 24).

12. Why is sanctifying grace also called '*Grace of Justification*'?

Because by sanctifying grace man is justified—that is, passes from the state of sin to the state of righteousness and holiness.

13. What, then, does the justification of the sinner include?

Justification includes, 1. Cleanness from all grievous sins at least, together with the remission of eternal punishment; and 2. The sanctification and renewal of the interior man.

'You are washed, you are sanctified, you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. vi. 11).