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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

VOL. 5 = THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END

PENTECOST SUNDAY

The Vanity of the Hope of Heaven in Those Who Do Not Keep the Commandments of God

“If any one love me, he will keep my word.”— St. John 14: 23.

This is the real proof, and the only way in which we can show our love of God, namely, by keeping the word of God, that is, His commandments. This is the only foundation of our hopes of heaven, the keeping the commandments. In vain should you hope for salvation, relying on the goodness and mercy of God, if you do not keep His commandments. In vain should you hope and desire salvation, relying on anything else, no matter what it is, if you do not keep the commandments, and indeed all of them. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (St. Matthew 19: 17). And yet what a vast number of people there are in the world who delude themselves with that false hope!

- I. *Many men desire and hope to go to heaven, but they do not keep the commandments of God.*
- II. *A still greater number desire and hope to go to heaven, but they do not keep all the commandments, or do not keep them constantly.*

If nothing more were required to gain heaven but the mere wish and hope, then all men would be saved. Sinners, no matter how wicked and godless they are: blasphemers, profane swearers, adulterers, detractors, unjust, unchaste men, murderers, drunkards, from whom St. Paul has taken away all hope of heaven, might then be of good heart, for heaven would be theirs. For there is no one so blind and so wicked, if he has a little spark of faith and reason left, as not to feel pleasure at the thought of being saved eternally. There is no one so hardened in guilt as not to be terrified at the thought of the everlasting fire of hell; no one so forgetful of his own welfare as not to wish to go to heaven; no one so despairing as not to desire to escape hell. But the wish and desire alone will not do here.

Heaven is a great gain that we must work for with diligence: “Trade till I come” (St. Luke 19: 13). Heaven is a crown that will not be given to any one who has not fought for it. Heaven is the promised land flowing with milk and honey, and to possess it we must go out of Egypt and wander through the desert; that is, we must detach our hearts from the world and the love of the world, deny ourselves and bear the cross laid on us. Heaven is a kingdom in which an infinite God makes the happiness of His elect, but it must be stormed and taken by violence: “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away” (St. Matthew 11: 12). Again: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (St. Matthew 19: 17).

Now, there are many who hope and wish for heaven, but they do not work for it. I trust I shall get to heaven. I will and must save my soul. God forbid that I should be lost forever. The salvation of my soul is the chief thing, on which everything depends. God grant that I may die a happy death! Such are the thoughts, the professions, the desires, the words of most, nay, nearly all Christians. Therefore I will strive earnestly for heaven; I will direct all my cares and occupations to that one end; I will keep all the commandments of God, avoid all sin and the dangers of sin, and diligently perform the duties of my state, and serve God zealously.

“Good master,” said the young man to our Lord, “what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?” I know well and see that the world is not for me, and that I am not for the world; for sooner or later I must leave it and go hence; what does it cost to win heaven? Our Lord gave a plain answer to this question: “If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments” (St. Matthew 19: 16, 17). The first and most necessary condition is: “if thou wilt.” Do you really wish it? Are you fully determined about it? He does not say: if thou wouldst wish; but if thou wilt. Oh, what a heap of false desires, wishes and intentions of going to heaven we have in our hearts; for we do not say: I will; I am fully determined, earnestly resolved; but I would wish; I should like. Our desires for heaven are nothing else but half acts of the will, slight and weak movements of the heart, fruitless and empty desires, sickly and vacillating resolutions, vain, natural longings which we have for all that is represented to us as good, pleasing, becoming and useful. Such lame and weak desires are common even with the greatest and most hardened sinners; for they well know what sin is: how detestable, dangerous and injurious it is, and they would wish to be freed from it; they are also aware of the beauty of virtue, and would willingly practice it; but even while they wish to turn from evil and lead good lives they go on in the old way and make no change. “The sluggard willeth and willeth not” (Prov. 13: 4).

And yet all people hope and desire to go to heaven. Ask them if they would not be glad to save their souls, if they have any intention and hope of doing that; there is no doubt, they will answer: We must go to heaven; we must save our souls. But you may wish and desire a long time before you save them in that way. No, that will never do; your wish is a mere empty desire that exists only in the imagination; it is not a firm, earnest determination of the will. Hell is full of souls that have wished to be eternally happy; not one of them wanted to be damned, but they did not wish earnestly; they were disposed in the matter just as you are. He who desires to attain the end must use the means necessary thereto. “If any one love me he will keep My word.” He who desires to gain heaven must keep the commandments of God, otherwise his hope is a false and deceitful one. And he must keep all the commandments, and that constantly, otherwise his hope is again deceitful and false; and yet it is entertained by most men.

Preach to some about mortification, fasting, abstinence from forbidden food, moderation in drinking—oh, in those things they find no difficulty; they think and say with the young man in the Gospel, whom Christ exhorted to keep the commandments: “All these things I have observed from my youth.” Thank God! I am no drunkard or reveller; I keep the fast days prescribed by the Church as a Catholic Christian should keep them. And so they go home from the sermon comforted, with a sure pledge of their eternal salvation. But preach to them about abstaining from forbidden carnal pleasures, about guarding the eyes and other senses so as not to wound purity by look or thought, and what happens? Even what happened with that young man when our Lord said to him: “Go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me.” At these words he went away sad, without making answer: “Who, being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful.” That did not suit him. If I say to a man: he who wishes to go to heaven must lead a chaste life, he is pleased with that, because he is not inclined to the vice of impurity, or lives happy in the married state; “all these things I have observed,” he will answer. But if I add: he who wishes to go to heaven must make restitution of ill-gotten goods and give them back to their lawful owner, even to the last farthing, then he goes away; that does not suit him. The third thinks: so far I am all right; I do not remember having injured any one in my whole life; “all

these things I have observed;” but if I say to him: he who wishes to go to heaven must lay aside hatred and ill-will, and live in peace with his neighbor, and forgive his enemy from his heart, that does not please him at all; he goes away sad. A fourth thinks: that is not for me; I have not an enemy on the face of the earth, and I wish well to every one as I do to myself; “all these things I have observed.” But if I say: you must also give up that intimacy, that company and occasion which is the radical cause of so many sins to you; you must renounce that vanity and love of dress that is a cause of scandal to others, and leads them into sin, then he goes away sad. A fifth thinks: this is not for me; “all these things I have observed.” But if I say: you must from day to day earnestly try to lessen and altogether give up your habit of cursing and swearing, then he shrugs his shoulders, and goes away sad. The sixth thinks: “all these things I have observed;” I do not curse or swear. But you must keep your unruly tongue in check, and give up that habit of faultfinding, abusing and talking uncharitably of others and injuring their reputation, thus sinning against charity; that is not at all to his taste; he goes away sad.

But this is not enough; all the commandments, without one exception, must be kept. It is with the Christian life as with faith. If I refuse to believe a single article of faith I am an unbeliever; if I fail to observe one point of the law I am wicked and deserve hell-fire. “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all” (St. James 2: 10). When you are on a journey does it help you to have three good and sound wheels on your carriage if the fourth is broken so that you cannot proceed? What does it avail your health to be free from fever if consumption chains you to your bed? What difference does it make to your life to be pierced with a sword or shot with a bullet? In the same way, how could it help your salvation to go with one foot towards heaven and with the other towards hell? You say: I am not a thief or an unjust man; that is all right; but you are puffed up and proud on account of your wealth, and you despise others, so that it is your pride that will send you to hell. You are not guilty of adultery or incest; that is right; but you are impure in your thoughts and desires; you are a cause of sin to others by your extravagance in dress, by your caresses and allurements; it is this latter vice that will condemn you. You are not one of those who seek quarrels and foment discord and disunion; but you are apt to rash-judge and speak ill of your neighbor. It is not a revengeful spirit, but rash judging and an unbridled tongue that will be the cause of your ruin. You are not a public, notorious, scandalous and abandoned sinner; but you are addicted to a secret sin known to yourself alone, and that will be reason enough for God to reject you. No matter what good works you perform, as long as you do not renounce all vices, you are only half a Christian; you are divided between God and the devil; you have only half a wish to go to heaven. God does not allow that; He must have all or nothing. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind” (St. Matthew 22: 37). “He that is not with me is against me” (St. Matthew 12: 30).

Every sin is an abomination in the sight of God, yet it would be better for many a one and more advantageous to his salvation, to be altogether and evidently vicious than to be only half devout. Why? Because a great and wicked sinner has a clearer perception of his unhappy and miserable state, and is more likely to free himself from it by sincere repentance and amendment through the fear of hell, while the half-Christian, since he is not conscious of grievous or very enormous sins, and actually does some apparently good works every day, flatters himself that his devotion is all right and lives assured of salvation without fear or anxiety, nor does he find out his mistake until he has actually entered on an unhappy eternity. It was the public sinner who stood humbly at the door of the temple, and, striking his breast, with contrite heart acknowledged his guilt: “Oh, God! be merciful to me a sinner” (St. Luke 18: 13). On the other hand, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, alms-giving and other works, and thought he was a saint; but, according to the testimony of our Lord, it was not he, but the publican who went home justified. And this is the meaning of the divine words of the Apocalypse: “I would thou wert cold, or hot; but because thou art lukewarm,” half fish, half flesh, belonging half to me and half to the devil, “.... I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.”

Do you wish to go to heaven? If so why do you take such little trouble about it? Do you not wish to go to heaven? What have you to seek or desire in this world? What do you hope, or fear, or love? Why do you live if all your hopes, fears, desires, longings, lives, labors, and love are not directed to that one necessary business for the sake of which alone you are on this earth, and that is the business of your eternal salvation? If you do not gain heaven, what good will all other things be to you? And must you then hear that terrible reproof from the lips of the divine Judge: "How often would I have gathered together.... and thou wouldst not?" How often have I desired to make you happy forever, and you would not accept my offer? Well, before it comes to that change your will. Now let us say once for all: Oh, my God! I will go to heaven; this is my earnest determination and I will work for its fulfillment constantly by carefully avoiding all sin and the occasions of sin, and by diligently performing all my duties through a true, zealous love for thee. And what is wanting to my weak will do thou supply by thy powerful grace, oh, Holy Ghost! who on this day didst so wonderfully change the Apostles; that thus strengthened by thy almighty power, I may hope with childlike confidence one day to enter heaven, where I shall see, love and praise thee with the heavenly Father, and his blessed Son, my Savior, Jesus Christ, for all eternity. Amen.

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