

Of the Sufficiency and Perfection of God.

by John Gill

The sermon emphasizes God's self-sufficiency, all-sufficiency, and perfection as foundational truths of His nature.

Scripture: Romans 11:35

Topics: "God's Sufficiency", "Divine Perfection"

Description

John Gill emphasizes the sufficiency and perfection of God, explaining that God is self-sufficient and does not require anything from creation to sustain His happiness or existence. He highlights that God's nature is perfect and complete, lacking nothing, and that all goodness and perfection originate from Him. Gill further illustrates that while God is the source of all blessings and grace, He does not gain anything from human worship or obedience, as these acts are for the benefit of humanity rather than for God Himself. Ultimately, God's perfection and all-sufficiency assure believers that He is capable of meeting all their needs and fulfilling His promises.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 1--Chapter 24

OF THE SUFFICIENCY AND PERFECTION OF GOD.

From this attribute of God, he has one of his names, "Shaddai", which signifies, who is sufficient, or all-sufficient; of which see Chapter 3. Three things may be observed under this attribute. 1. That God is a self-sufficient Being, and needs not anything from without himself to support himself, or to make himself happy. He is the "first" of Beings, the first and the last; before him there was no God formed, nor will be any after him; from everlasting to everlasting he is God; and therefore his existence is not owing to any; nor has he received any assistance or support from any; being self-existent, he must be self-subsistent; as he existed of himself, and subsisted in and of himself, millions and millions of ages, even an eternity, inconceivable to us, alone, before any other existed, he must be self-sufficient, and as then, so to all eternity[1].

He is an "infinite" and "all-comprehending" Being; to what is infinite nothing can be added: if anything was wanting in him he would be finite; if there was any excellency in another, which is not in him, he would not

be infinite, and so not God: being infinite, he is incomprehensible by others; and comprehends in himself all excellencies, perfections, and happiness; and therefore self-sufficient; "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again for of him, and through him, and for him are all things" (Rom. 11:35, 36).

God is the "summum bonum", the chief good, and has all that is good in him; he is good essentially, originally, and inderivatively; the source and fountain of all goodness; every good and perfect gift comes from him, (James 1:17) and therefore must have a fulness of goodness in him sufficient for himself, as well as for his creatures, and can receive nothing from them; otherwise he would not be the independent Being he is: all have their dependence on him, and owe their being, and the preservation of it, to him; but he depends on none; which he would, if he stood in need of, or received anything from them.

He is possessed of all perfections, as has been abundantly showed in the preceding chapters, and is sufficiently happy in them; he is perfect and entire, wanting nothing, and therefore self-sufficient[2]: he is the Fountain; creatures, and what they have, are streams; and it would be as absurd for him to need them, or anything from them, as for the fountain to need its streams. Besides, God in his divine persons, God Father, Son and Spirit, have enough within themselves, to give the utmost, yea, infinite complacency, delight, and satisfaction among themselves, and to one another, and had before any creatures were made, and would have had if none had been made, and so ever will; the Father delighted in the Son, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person"; the Son in the Father, before whom he was always rejoicing, when as yet no creature existed; and both in the blessed Spirit, proceeding from them; and he in them, see (Prov. 8:30) for creation adds nothing at all to the perfection and happiness of God, nor makes the least alteration in him.

It is indeed said, "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created", (Rev. 4:11) but pleasure there does not signify delight, satisfaction, and happiness; as if they were made for the sake of that in God; to add unto it, and increase it; but the good will and pleasure of God; it is dia to yelhma sou, and should be rendered, "by thy will they are and were created: God has made all things for himself; that is, for his glory, his manifestative glory; but then this adds nothing to his essential glory and happiness; the heavens, and so the other parts of the creation, declare his glory; but to whom? not to himself, he needs no such declaration; he knows perfectly his own glory, which is always invariably the same; but to angels and men, that they may contemplate it, and receive benefit by it.

The invisible perfections of God, his eternal power and Godhead, are seen and understood by the things that are made; but not by God himself, who needs no such glass to view them in; but by men; and the design thereof is, to make some better and happier, and others inexcusable. All creatures stand in need of God to supply them and support them; they consist in him, are upheld by the word of his power, live, and move, and have their beings in him; but he stands in need of none of them, being self-sufficient.

And as he does not stand in need of the creation in general, so not of men and angels in particular; not of men, nor of any services of theirs, which can add nothing to his perfection and happiness; not of their worship, for he is "not worshipped with mens' hands, as though he needed anythings"[3], no not their worship, (Acts 17:25) he is and ought to be the sole object of their worship; it is their duty to worship him, and that in a spiritual manner, suitable to his nature as a Spirit; but then not he, but they are the gainers by it; the ordinances of divine service under the former dispensation were, and those under the present are, for the instruction, edification, comfort, and peace of the worshippers, who are hereby led into communion with God, and the enjoyment of his gracious presence; and so find it is good for them to wait upon him in

them.

But what benefit does he receive thereby? he stands in no need of their prayers; it is both their duty and privilege to pray to him, the God of their life, for the mercies of it, temporal and spiritual; and he is pleased to express his approbation of it, and to resent a contrary behaviour: but who has the advantage of it? not he, but they; for whose sake is the throne of grace set up? not for his own sake, but for the sake of his people, that they may come to it and find grace and mercy to help them in their time of need: nor does he want their praises, nor is he benefited by them; they are his due, and it becomes men to give them to him; and he condescends to accept of them, and express his well pleasedness in them; but then the celebration of his praises adds nothing to his perfection and happiness, but to the perfection and happiness of men, who are made better thereby: nor is the obedience and righteousness of men of any profit to God; obedience to his commands ought to be yielded, and works of righteousness enjoined by him ought to be performed; but then when we have done all we can, we are but "unprofitable servants" to him; "if thou be righteous what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" such works and such righteousness may be profitable to men, and is a reason why they are to be done; but "can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself, or to others? is it any pleasure to the almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?" (Job 22:2, 3, 35:7, 8; Luke 17:10; Titus 3:8).

Should it be said, that God is glorified by men in the worship of him, by prayer to him, and praising of him; by obedience to his will, and by living soberly, righteously, and godly, (John 15:9; Matthew 5:16) it is very true, these make for the manifestation and display of his glory among men, but make no addition to his essential glory and happiness; the same may be said of the worship and services of angels, of the imperfection and unprofitableness of which to God they are sensible themselves, and blush and cover their faces while performing them, (Isa. 6:2, 3) and though they are indeed made use of as instruments in providence (but not in creation) in the preservation of God's people, and in the destruction of their enemies, and in other affairs of this world, yet not of necessity, but of choice; it is not because God needs them, and cannot do without them, but because it is his will and pleasure; just as he makes use of the ministry, and ministers of the word, for the conversion of sinners and comfort of saints; not that he needs them, nor could not convert the one and comfort the other without them; for it is certain he can, and often does, but because these are the means and instruments he chooses to make use of, (1 Cor. 3:5-7).

There is a very remarkable expression in (Ps. 16:2, 3). My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight: which if spoken by David of himself only, indeed confirms what has been before asserted, that the goodness of men, even of the best of men, is of no advantage to God himself, but to others. The goodness of David in preparing for the building of the temple, and providing for the worship of God in it, in composing hymns and psalms to be sung by men, and in the whole of his life and conversation, was of no avail to the essential happiness of God; but was of use to the saints, both for their profit and by way of example to them: but if spoken by him in the person of Christ, as it is clear the words are, then they carry in them an higher sense still; as, that the holiness of Christ, as man, added nothing to the perfection of God and his nature; that the obedience he yielded in it was for the sake of men, who had the advantage of it, and not God; that the satisfaction he made to divine justice for his people, God stood in no need of; he could have glorified his justice in the destruction of them, as well as in the apostate angels, the old world, and Sodom and Gomorrah: though the debt of obedience paid to the law, and the debt of punishment paid to justice in their room, has magnified the law and made it honourable; the benefit of this redounds to men only; who hereby have their

debts paid, their scores cleared, and they stand free and discharged in open court.

Though the glory of God is greatly displayed in salvation by Christ, the good will is to men; and all the good things he is come an high priest of, and that come thereby, come not to God, but to men; as peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life. God is then a self-sufficient being, and needs nothing from without himself; nor does he receive anything. 2. God is an all-sufficient Being, and has enough within himself to communicate to his creatures. He is able to do whatsoever he pleases, to fulfil all his engagements and promises, and to do exceeding abundantly above all that men ask or think.

And so communicative and diffusive is his goodness, that it extends to all his creatures, and every good and perfect gift comes from him; which is a full proof of his all-sufficiency: and which appears, 2a. In his gifts of nature and providence; for he "gives life, and breath, and all things" to his creatures, (Acts 17:25). A painter may paint as near to life as can be, and a sculptor may give a statue its just features, and frame its limbs in proper symmetry and proportion, but neither of them can give life and breath; but God is sufficient to do this, and has done it: he breathed into Adam the breath of life; and gives life to all his posterity; and is, with great propriety, called the God of their life, (Ps. 42:8) and he is sufficient to support, maintain, and preserve the life he has given, and does, as long as he pleases, (Job 10:12, 12:10; Ps. 66:9) and to provide for men all the necessities of life, as food and raiment; which Jacob was fully satisfied of, and therefore covenanted with God for them, (Gen. 28:20) and to take care of all the creatures; the fowls of heaven, and of the mountains; the beasts of the field and forest; and "the cattle on a thousand hills"; which, as they are his property, they are his care; and a large family they be to provide for every day, and food suitable to them; and yet this he is sufficient to do, and does; all wait upon him, and he gives them their portion of meat in due season, (Ps. 50:10, 11, 104:27, 28, 145:15, 147:9) yea, he is sufficient to govern the whole world; nor does he need any wisdom, counsel, advice, and assistance in it, from any of his creatures, (Isa. 40:13, 14) he disposes and overrules all things as he pleases; and not only influences, directs, and manages, in matters of the greatest importance, which concern kings and governors, kingdoms and states, but even those of the lowest consideration and use; and so in all things intervening, or of a class between the one and the other, (Ps. 22:28; Prov. 8:15, 16; Matthew 10:29, 30) in a view of which it may well be said, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" &c.

What an all-sufficiency must he be possessed of! (Rom. 11:33). 2b. God appears to be all-sufficient in the communications of his grace; he is the God of all grace, and is able to cause all grace to abound towards his people, and to supply all their wants out of that rich and glorious plenitude, and all-sufficiency in himself, by Jesus Christ; he has stored the covenant with all the blessings of grace; he has prevented Christ, the head and mediator of it with all the blessings of goodness; he has blessed his people in him with all spiritual blessings, and given them grace in him before the world began; and caused the fulness of it to dwell in him, which is always sufficient for them, sufficient for them in all ages and periods of time; for them of all nations and kingdoms throughout the world; for them in every state and condition of life; for all believers, weak or strong; and he has a sufficiency of it for all saving purposes; for their acceptance with God, and justification before him; for the remission of their sins, and the cleansing of their souls, and for the supply of all their wants while they are in this state of imperfection; and he has a sufficiency of it to communicate to them at all times, when they are called to service, ordinary or extraordinary, to do or suffer for his name's sake; in times of affliction, temptation, desertion, and in the hour of death, to bear up under, and carry them through all, and bring them safe to his kingdom and glory (John 1:14, 16; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:19). 3.

God is a perfect Being; entirely perfect, and wanting nothing; "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect", (Matthew 5:48) his nature is perfect; the more simple and uncompounded any being is, the more perfect it is. God is a Spirit, "actus simplicissimus", the most pure, spiritual, simple, and uncompounded Being, and therefore the most perfect. No perfection of Deity is wanting in him; as appears from what has been under consideration. There is a fulness of the Godhead which dwells in Christ, and the same therefore must be in each divine person, and especially in God, essentially considered; and every "attribute" of his is "perfect"; he is perfectly immutable; there is no variableness in him, nor shadow of turning, (James 1:17) he is perfect in knowledge, knows himself, and all creatures and things perfectly, (Job 37:16) and there is a depth in his wisdom, as well as in his knowledge, which are unfathomable, (Rom. 11:33) and as for his power, nothing is too hard for him; nor is his hand shortened that it cannot save, (Isa. 40:26, 28, 59:1) and his holiness is without the least tarnish; in him are "light", purity, and holiness, and "no darkness" of sin "at all", (1 John 1:5) all the perfections and excellencies that are in creatures, angels, and men, are, in the most perfect manner, in him, agreeable to his nature; as they must, since they all come from him, (James 1:17) and though there are some things which are excellencies in creatures, as the reasoning faculty in men, and faith in the Christian, which, properly speaking, cannot be said to be in God; yet these are such as would be imperfections in him; since the former supposes some want of knowledge, which the reasoning power is employed to find out, and the latter is but an obscure knowledge, and proceeds upon the authority of another; neither of which can be supposed in God, whose knowledge is clear and perfect, and to whom no authority is superior; and therefore the want of them does not infer any imperfection in him, but, on the contrary, the highest perfection.

Once more, he is a rock, and "his work is perfect", (Deut. 32:4) his work of creation is finished, and so is the work of redemption, and, ere long, the mystery of providence will be finished, and the work of grace on the heart of everyone of his elect; and as for God, his way is perfect, (Ps. 18:30) his ways of providence are without any just blame; every path of mercy and truth he pursues, he never leaves till he has finished it; and the way he prescribes to his people to walk in, is perfect; and the scriptures, which are of him, are able to make the man of God perfect, (Rev. 15:4; Ps. 25:10, 19:7; 2 Tim. 1:16, 17). ENDNOTES:

[1] thn aristhn econta zwhn kai thn autarkestathn diatelelei ton apanta aiwna, Aristot. de Coelo, l. 1. c. 9. and this name, he says, is pronounced by the ancients.

[2] to gar teleion agayon autarkev einai dokei, Aristot. Ethic. l. 1. c. 5.

[3] It is a notion of the heathens themselves, that God stands in no need of anything; auto men gar to yeion anendeev, Sallust. de Diis, c. 15. yewn men idion einai mhdenov deiyai, Diogenes apud Laert. l. 6. in Vita Menedem.

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