

Boyhood Perplexity

by Clement of Rome

Clement of Rome shares his boyhood struggle with finding truth in philosophical debates, highlighting the instability of opinions and his desire for peace.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 1:18, Colossians 2:8, James 1:5

Topics: "Spiritual Doubt", "Faith Seeking"

Description

Clement of Rome reflects on his struggles with philosophical debates and the constant shifting of doctrines, causing him to feel disheartened and unable to find true satisfaction or peace. He realizes that opinions are often accepted based on the persuasiveness of their defenders rather than their actual truth, leading him to groan from the depth of his soul in frustration and confusion.

Transcript

From my boyhood, then, being involved in such reasonings, in order to learn something definite, I used to resort to the schools of the philosophers. But nought else did I see than the setting up and the knocking down of doctrines, and strifes, and seeking for victory, and the arts of syllogisms, and the skill of assumptions; and sometimes one opinion prevailed,--as, for example, that the soul is immortal, and sometimes that it is mortal. If, therefore, at any time the doctrine prevailed that it is immortal, I was glad; and when the doctrine prevailed that it is mortal, I was grieved.

And again, I was the more disheartened because I could not establish either doctrine to my satisfaction.

However, I perceived that the opinions on subjects under discussion are taken as true or false, according to their defenders, and do not appear as they really are. Perceiving, therefore, now that the acceptance does not depend on the real nature of the subjects discussed, but that opinions are proved to be true or false, according to ability of those who defend them, I was still more than ever at a loss in regard of things. Wherefore I groaned from the depth of my soul. For neither was I able to establish anything, nor could I shake off the consideration of such things, though, as I said before, I wished it.

For although I frequently charged myself to be at peace, in some way or other thoughts on these subjects, accompanied with a feeling of pleasure, would come into my mind.

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