

Knowledge Puffeth Up; Charity Edifieth.

by Francois Fenelon

Francois Fenelon's sermon teaches that true spiritual growth is rooted in charity and humility rather than the mere accumulation of knowledge.

Scripture: Matthew 5:3, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 8:1, 1 Corinthians 13:2, James 1:5

Topics: "Spiritual Humility", "Christian Love"

Description

Francois Fenelon emphasizes the importance of humility, love, and charity over the pursuit of knowledge and recognition in the spiritual journey. He encourages a focus on dying to self-love, embracing humility, and seeking obscurity rather than seeking advancement and honor in religious circles. Fenelon reminds believers to listen to God in silence, renounce vanity, and practice solid virtue without seeking validation from others. He warns against the deception of knowledge puffing up the ego and highlights that true edification comes from charity and love, particularly the love of God and self-abandonment for His sake.

Transcript

LETTER VIII.

Knowledge puffeth up; charity edifieth.

I am happy to hear of your frame of mind, and to find you communicating in simplicity everything that takes place within you. Never hesitate to write me whatever you think God requires.

It is not at all surprising that you have a sort of jealous ambition to advance in the spiritual life, and to be intimate with persons of distinction who are pious. Such things are by nature very flattering to our self-love, and it eagerly seeks them. But we should not strive to gratify such an ambition by making great progress in the religious life, and by cultivating the acquaintance of persons high in honor; our aim should be to die to the flattering delights of self-love, by becoming humble and in love with obscurity and contempt, and to have a single eye to God.

We may hear about perfection without end, and become perfectly familiar with its language, and yet be as far from its attainment as ever. Our great aim should be, to be deaf to self, to hearken to God in silence, to renounce every vanity, and to devote ourselves to solid virtue. Let us speak but little and do much, without a thought as to whether we are observed or not.

God will teach you more than the most experienced Christians, and better than all the books that the world has ever seen. And what is your object in such an eager chase after knowledge? Are you not aware that all we need is to be poor in spirit, and to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified? Knowledge puffeth up; it is only charity that can edify. (1 Cor. viii. 1.) Be content with charity, then, alone. What! is it possible that the love of God, and the abandonment of self for his sake, is only to be reached through the acquisition of so much knowledge? You have already more than you use, and need further illuminations much less than the practice of what you already know. O how deceived we are, when we suppose we are advancing, because our vain curiosity is gratified by the enlightenment of our intellect! Be humble, and expect not the gifts of God from man.

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