

Weakness Preferable to Strength, and Practice Better Than Knowledge.

by Francois Fenelon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and self-distrust, and the dangers of strength and knowledge, encouraging the listener to focus on practice and growth in perfection.

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5, Philippians 1:6, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Humility"

Description

Francois Fenelon preaches about the importance of embracing weakness over strength and prioritizing practice over knowledge. He encourages humility, self-distrust, and a sincere openness to correction and growth. Fenelon emphasizes the need to be pliable to the impressions of grace in the practice of the gospel, urging patience in the journey towards spiritual maturity and perfection.

Transcript

LETTER XXIX.

Weakness preferable to strength, and practice better than knowledge.

I am told, my dear child in our Lord, that you are suffering from sickness. I suffer with you, for I love you dearly; but I cannot but kiss the hand that smites you, and I pray you to kiss it lovingly with me. You have heretofore abused your health and the pleasures derived from it; this weakness and its attendant pains are the natural consequence of such a course.

I pray God only that He may depress your spirit even more than your body, and while He comforts the latter according to your need, that He may entirely vanquish the former. O how strong we are when we begin to perceive that we are but weakness and infirmity! Then we are ever ready to believe that we are mistaken, and to correct ourselves while confessing it; our minds are ever open to the illumination of others; then we are authoritative in nothing, and say the most decided things with simplicity and deference for others; then we do not object to be judged, and submit without hesitation to the censure of the first comer. At the same time, we judge no one without absolute necessity; we speak only to those who desire it, mentioning the imperfections we seem to have discovered, without dogmatism, and rather to gratify their wishes than from a desire to be believed or create a reputation for wisdom.

I pray God that He may keep you faithful to his grace, and that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. i. 6.) We must bear with ourselves with patience and without flattery, and remain in unceasing subjection to every means of overcoming our thoughts and inward repugnances; we shall thus become more pliable to the impressions of grace in the practice of the gospel. But let this work be done quietly and peacefully, and let it not be entered upon too eagerly, as though it could all be accomplished in a single day. Let us reason little, but do much. If we are not careful, the acquisition of knowledge will so occupy this life that we shall need another to reduce our acquirements into practice. We are in danger of believing ourselves advanced towards perfection in proportion to our knowledge[5] of the way; but all our beautiful theories, far from assisting in the death of self, only serve to nourish the life of Adam in us by a secret delight and confidence in our illumination. Be quit then of all trust in your own power and in your own knowledge of the way, and you will make a great stride towards perfection. Humility and self-distrust, with a frank ingenuousness, are fundamental virtues for you.

Source:

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