

Wanting No Share in Comfort

by Thomas a Kempis

To truly follow God, we must learn to live without human consolation and trust in His divine will, even in the midst of adversity.

Scripture: Psalm 27:10, James 1:12, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 2:7

Topics: "Suffering And Trials", "Christian Perseverance"

Description

Thomas a Kempis preaches about the importance of enduring trials and temptations without seeking human or divine consolation, but rather focusing on the honor of God. He emphasizes the need to willingly endure hardships for the love of Christ, following the example of martyrs like Lawrence who chose God's pleasure over human comfort. Kempis encourages humility, patience, and reliance on God's mercy and grace, highlighting that both spiritual consolation and temptation are part of the journey towards God.

Transcript

IT IS not hard to spurn human consolation when we have the divine. It is, however, a very great thing indeed to be able to live without either divine or human comforting and for the honor of God willingly to endure this exile of heart, not to seek oneself in anything, and to think nothing of one's own merit.

Does it matter much, if at the coming of grace, you are cheerful and devout? This is an hour desired by all, for he whom the grace of God sustains travels easily enough. What wonder if he feel no burden when borne up by the Almighty and led on by the Supreme Guide! For we are always glad to have something to comfort us, and only with difficulty does a man divest himself of self.

The holy martyr, Lawrence, with his priest, conquered the world because he despised everything in it that seemed pleasing to him, and for love of Christ patiently suffered the great high priest of God, Sixtus, whom he loved dearly, to be taken from him. Thus, by his love for the Creator he overcame the love of man, and chose instead of human consolation the good pleasure of God. So you, too, must learn to part with an intimate and much-needed friend for the love of God. Do not take it to heart when you are deserted by a friend, knowing that in the end we must all be parted from one another.

A man must fight long and bravely against himself before he learns to master himself fully and to direct all his affections toward God. When he trusts in himself, he easily takes to human consolation. The true lover of Christ, however, who sincerely pursues virtue, does not fall back upon consolations nor seek such pleasures of sense, but prefers severe trials and hard labors for the sake of Christ.

When, therefore, spiritual consolation is given by God, receive it gratefully, but understand that it is His gift and not your meriting. Do not exult, do not be overjoyed, do not be presumptuous, but be the humbler for the gift, more careful and wary in all your actions, for this hour will pass and temptation will come in its wake.

When consolation is taken away, do not at once despair but wait humbly and patiently for the heavenly visit, since God can restore to you more abundant solace.

This is neither new nor strange to one who knows God's ways, for such change of fortune often visited the great saints and prophets of old. Thus there was one who, when grace was with him, declared: "In my prosperity I said: 'I shall never be moved.'" But when grace was taken away, he adds what he experienced in himself: "Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled." Meanwhile he does not despair; rather he prays more earnestly to the Lord, saying: "To Thee, O Lord, will I cry; and I will make supplication to my God." At length, he receives the fruit of his prayer, and testifying that he was heard, says "The Lord hath heard, and hath had mercy on me: the Lord became my helper." And how was he helped? "Thou hast turned," he says, "my mourning into joy, and hast surrounded me with gladness." [14]

If this is the case with great saints, we who are weak and poor ought not to despair because we are fervent at times and at other times cold, for the spirit comes and goes according to His will. Of this the blessed Job declared: "Thou visitest him early in the morning, and Thou provest him suddenly." [15]

In what can I hope, then, or in whom ought I trust, save only in the great mercy of God and the hope of heavenly grace? For though I have with me good men, devout brethren, faithful friends, holy books, beautiful treatises, sweet songs and hymns, all these help and please but little when I am abandoned by grace and left to my poverty. At such times there is no better remedy than patience and resignation of self to the will of God.

I have never met a man so religious and devout that he has not experienced at some time a withdrawal of grace and felt a lessening of fervor. No saint was so sublimely rapt and enlightened as not to be tempted before and after. He, indeed, is not worthy of the sublime contemplation of God who has not been tried by some tribulation for the sake of God. For temptation is usually the sign preceding the consolation that is to follow, and heavenly consolation is promised to all those proved by temptation. "To him that overcometh," says Christ, "I will give to eat of the Tree of Life." [16] Divine consolation, then, is given in order to make a man braver in enduring adversity, and temptation follows in order that he may not pride himself on the good he has done.

The devil does not sleep, nor is the flesh yet dead; therefore, you must never cease your preparation for battle, because on the right and on the left are enemies who never rest.

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