**The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis**

**BOOK THREE:** INTERNAL CONSOLATION

### **Chapter 12:** Acquiring Patience in the fight against Concupisence

**Quote:**

#### “The Disciple

#### PATIENCE, O Lord God, is very necessary for me, I see, because there are many adversities in this life. No matter what plans I make for my own peace, my life cannot be free from struggle and sorrow.

#### The Voice of Christ

#### My child, you are right, yet My wish is not that you seek that peace which is free from temptations or meets with no opposition, but rather that you consider yourself as having found peace when you have been tormented with many tribulations and tried with many adversities.

#### If you say that you cannot suffer much, how will you endure the fire of purgatory? Of two evils, the lesser is always to be chosen. Therefore, in order that you may escape the everlasting punishments to come, try to bear present evils patiently for the sake of God.

#### Do you think that men of the world have no suffering, or perhaps but little? Ask even those who enjoy the most delights and you will learn otherwise. "But," you will say, "they enjoy many pleasures and follow their own wishes; therefore they do not feel their troubles very much."

#### Granted that they do have whatever they wish, how long do you think it will last? Behold, they who prosper in the world shall perish as smoke, and there shall be no memory of their past joys. Even in this life they do not find rest in these pleasures without bitterness, weariness, and fear. For they often receive the penalty of sorrow from the very thing whence they believe their happiness comes. And it is just. Since they seek and follow after pleasures without reason, they should not enjoy them without shame and bitterness.

#### How brief, how false, how unreasonable and shameful all these pleasures are! Yet in their drunken blindness men do not understand this, but like brute beasts incur death of soul for the miserly enjoyment of a corruptible life.

#### Therefore, My child, do not pursue your lusts, but turn away from your own will. "Seek thy pleasure in the Lord and He will give thee thy heart's desires." If you wish to be truly delighted and more abundantly comforted by Me, behold, in contempt of all worldly things and in the cutting off of all base pleasures shall your blessing be, and great consolation shall be given you. Further, the more you withdraw yourself from any solace of creatures, the sweeter and stronger comfort will you find in Me.

#### At first you will not gain these blessings without sadness and toil and conflict. Habit already formed will resist you, but it shall be overcome by a better habit. The flesh will murmur against you, but it will be bridled by fervor of spirit. The old serpent will sting and trouble you, but prayer will put him to flight and by steadfast, useful toil the way will be closed to him.”

**Definition:**

Concupiscence - The human inclination to prefer that which is sinful to that which is holy

**Scripture:**

[Romans](https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/Proverbs/23/17) 7:7-25

What shall we say, then?  Is the law sinful? Certainly not!  Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.  For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

**Concept:**

God's law creates a conflict between the flesh and the spirit of a person which results is a deeper relationship with God when their spirit is turned over to Christ and the Holy Spirit dwells within them.

**Discussion:**

Why is concupiscence such a major issue in the church?

What does it mean to be spiritually pure of heart?

What causes moral weakness and why is it a concern to the Christian church?

How do believers develop patience and experience God’s peace during the fight against concupiscence?