

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis

BOOK THREE: INTERNAL CONSOLATION

Chapter 36: The Vain Judgments of Men

Quote:

“The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, trust firmly in the Lord, and do not fear the judgment of men when conscience tells you that you are upright and innocent. For it is good and blessed to suffer such things, and they will not weigh heavily on the humble heart that trusts in God rather than in itself. Many men say many things, and therefore little faith is to be put in them. Likewise, it is impossible to satisfy all men. Although Paul tried to please all in the Lord, and became all things to all men, yet he made little of their opinions. He labored abundantly for the edification and salvation of others, as much as lay in him and as much as he could, but he could not escape being sometimes judged and despised by others. Therefore, he committed all to God Who knows all things, and defended himself by his patience and humility against the tongues of those who spoke unjustly or thought foolish things and lies, or made accusations against him. Sometimes, indeed, he did answer them, but only lest his silence scandalize the weak.

Who are you, then, that you should be afraid of mortal man? Today he is here, tomorrow he is not seen. Fear God and you will not be afraid of the terrors of men. What can anyone do to you by word or injury? He hurts himself rather than you, and no matter who he may be he cannot escape the judgment of God. Keep God before your eyes, therefore, and do not quarrel with peevish words.

If it seems, then, that you are worsted and that you suffer undeserved shame, do not repine over it and do not lessen your crown by impatience. Look instead to heaven, to Me, Who have power to deliver you from all disgrace and injury, and to render to everyone according to his works.

Definition:

Reverent Fear - also known as fear of the Lord - a deep respect and awe for God's greatness, holiness, and authority, leading to humble obedience and worship

Scripture:

Proverbs 29:25:

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.

Psalms 118:6:

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?

Romans 8:31:

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

1 Peter 3:14:

But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.'

Colossians 3:23-24:

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Concept:

Fear God and trust God and you will not be afraid of the judgments, opinions, and terrors of men

Discussion:

How do the Bible verses provided reinforce the message in the passage about trusting in the Lord and not fearing the judgment of men? How can these teachings help individuals navigate challenges and criticism in their lives?

In what ways do the verses from Proverbs, Psalms, and Romans align with the notion that fearing God rather than mortal man leads to spiritual strength and security? How can believers apply this principle in their daily lives to overcome fear and seek God's guidance?

Reflecting on the teachings of Paul in the passage and the verses from Colossians, how can Christians balance the desire to serve and please others with the ultimate goal of pleasing God? How can believers emulate Paul's example of focusing on God's approval rather than seeking validation from people?