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

**BOOK THREE:** INTERNAL CONSOLATION

### **Chapter 22:** Remember the Innumerable Gifts of God

**Quote:**

“The Disciple

OPEN my heart, O Lord, to Your law and teach me to walk in the way of Your commandments. Let me understand Your will. Let me remember Your blessings--all of them and each single one of them--with great reverence and care so that henceforth I may return worthy thanks for them. I know that I am unable to give due thanks for even the least of Your gifts. I am unworthy of the benefits You have given me, and when I consider Your generosity my spirit faints away before its greatness. All that we have of soul and body, whatever we possess interiorly or exteriorly, by nature or by grace, are Your gifts and they proclaim Your goodness and mercy from which we have received all good things.

If one receives more and another less, yet all are Yours and without You nothing can be received. He who receives greater things cannot glory in his own merit or consider himself above others or behave insolently toward those who receive less. He who attributes less to himself and is the more humble and devout in returning thanks is indeed the greater and the better, while he who considers himself lower than all men and judges himself to be the least worthy, is the more fit to receive the greater blessing.

He, on the other hand, who has received fewer gifts should not be sad or impatient or envious of the richer man. Instead he should turn his mind to You and offer You the greatest praise because You give so bountifully, so freely and willingly, without regard to persons. All things come from You; therefore, You are to be praised in all things. You know what is good for each of us; and why one should receive less and another more is not for us to judge, but for You Who have marked every man's merits.

Therefore, O Lord God, I consider it a great blessing not to have many things which human judgment holds praiseworthy and glorious, for one who realizes his own poverty and vileness should not be sad or downcast at it, but rather consoled and happy because You, O God, have chosen the poor, the humble, and the despised in this world to be Your friends and servants. The truth of this is witnessed by Your Apostles, whom You made princes over all the world. Yet they lived in this world without complaining, so humble and simple, so free from malice and deceit, that they were happy even to suffer reproach for Your name and to embrace with great affection that which the world abhors.

A man who loves You and recognizes Your benefits, therefore, should be gladdened by nothing so much as by Your will, by the good pleasure of Your eternal decree. With this he should be so contented and consoled that he would wish to be the least as others wish to be the greatest; that he would be as peaceful and satisfied in the last place as in the first, and as willing to be despised, unknown and forgotten, as to be honored by others and to have more fame than they. He should prefer Your will and the love of Your honor to all else, and it should comfort him more than all the benefits which have been, or will be, given him."

**Definition:**

Spiritual Gift - a special divine empowerment bestowed on each believer by the Holy Spirit to accomplish a given ministry God's way according to His grace and discernment to be used within the context of the Body of Christ

**Scripture:**

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Ephesians 4:11-16

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

**Concept:**

We are not worthy of receiving the supernatural ability to do the will of God. But when we approach God in humility and gratitude with a pure heart, God is eager and willing to give us the supernatural ability to glorify and worship Him.

**Discussion:**

How does God use spiritual gifts to lessen the impact of sin in the world?

What’s the difference between talent and divine spiritual gifts?

How does God bestowing a spiritual gift differ from people developing their talents?