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

**BOOK THREE:** INTERNAL CONSOLATION

### **Chapter 31:** To Find the Creator, Forsake All Creatures

**Quote:**

"The Disciple

O LORD, I am in sore need still of greater grace if I am to arrive at the point where no man and no created thing can be an obstacle to me. For as long as anything holds me back, I cannot freely fly to You. He that said "Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" desired to fly freely to You. Who is more at rest than he who aims at nothing but God? And who more free than the man who desires nothing on earth?

It is well, then, to pass over all creation, perfectly to abandon self, and to see in ecstasy of mind that You, the Creator of all, have no likeness among all Your creatures, and that unless a man be freed from all creatures, he cannot attend freely to the Divine. The reason why so few contemplative persons are found, is that so few know how to separate themselves entirely from what is transitory and created.

For this, indeed, great grace is needed, grace that will raise the soul and lift it up above itself. Unless a man be elevated in spirit, free from all creatures, and completely united to God, all his knowledge and possessions are of little moment. He who considers anything great except the one, immense, eternal good will long be little and lie groveling on the earth. Whatever is not God is nothing and must be accounted as nothing.

There is great difference between the wisdom of an enlightened and devout man and the learning of a well-read and brilliant scholar, for the knowledge which flows down from divine sources is much nobler than that laboriously acquired by human industry.

Many there are who desire contemplation, but who do not care to do the things which contemplation requires. It is also a great obstacle to be satisfied with externals and sensible things, and to have so little of perfect mortification. I know not what it is, or by what spirit we are led, or to what we pretend--we who wish to be called spiritual--that we spend so much labor and even more anxiety on things that are transitory and mean, while we seldom or never advert with full consciousness to our interior concerns.

Alas, after very little recollection we falter, not weighing our deeds by strict examination. We pay no attention to where our affections lie, nor do we deplore the fact that our actions are impure.

Remember that because all flesh had corrupted its course, the great deluge followed. Since, then, our interior affection is corrupt, it must be that the action which follows from it, the index as it were of our lack of inward strength, is also corrupt. Out of a pure heart come the fruits of a good life.

People are wont to ask how much a man has done, but they think little of the virtue with which he acts. They ask: Is he strong? rich? handsome? a good writer? a good singer? or a good worker? They say little, however, about how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and spiritual. Nature looks to his outward appearance; grace turns to his inward being. The one often errs, the other trusts in God and is not deceived."

**Definition:**

Contemplative - Deep reflection that goes beyond mere surface-level thinking and seeks to gain insight, understanding, or a deeper connection with God, oneself, or the world around us

**Scripture:**

Psalm 46:10

Be still and know that I am God.

Romans 5:3-5:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will

Philippians 4:8:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Colossians 3:2

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things

Psalm 119:15

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

**Concept:**

When we prioritize worldly concerns over God's grace, we sacrifice our contemplative spiritual connection with God thereby limiting our spiritual growth.

**Discussion:**

How can prioritizing worldly concerns over God's grace impact our spiritual connection with God?

What are some consequences of sacrificing our spiritual connection with God by placing worldly concerns first?

In what ways does prioritizing God's grace over worldly concerns contribute to spiritual growth?