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

**BOOK THREE:** INTERNAL CONSOLATION

### **Chapter 34:** God is Sweet Above All Things to Those Who Love Him

**Quote:**

"The Disciple

 BEHOLD, my God and my all! What more do I wish for; what greater happiness can I desire? O sweet and delicious word! But sweet only to him who loves it, and not to the world or the things that are in the world.

My God and my all! These words are enough for him who understands, and for him who loves it is a joy to repeat them often. For when You are present, all things are delightful; when You are absent, all things become loathsome. It is You Who give a heart tranquillity, great peace and festive joy. It is You Who make us think well of all things, and praise You in all things. Without You nothing can give pleasure for very long, for if it is to be pleasing and tasteful, Your grace and the seasoning of Your wisdom must be in it. What is there that can displease him whose happiness is in You? And, on the contrary, what can satisfy him whose delight is not in You?

The wise men of the world, the men who lust for the flesh, are wanting in Your wisdom, because in the world is found the utmost vanity, and in the flesh is death. But they who follow You by disdaining worldly things and mortifying the flesh are known to be truly wise, for they are transported from vanity to truth, from flesh to spirit. By such as these God is relished, and whatever good is found in creatures they turn to praise of the Creator. But great--yes, very great, indeed--is the difference between delight in the Creator and in the creature, in eternity and in time, in Light uncreated and in the light that is reflected.

O Light eternal, surpassing all created brightness, flash forth the lightning from above and enlighten the inmost recesses of my heart. Cleanse, cheer, enlighten, and vivify my spirit with all its powers, that it may cleave to You in ecstasies of joy. Oh, when will that happy and wished-for hour come, that You may fill me with Your presence and become all in all to me? So long as this is not given me, my joy will not be complete.

The old man, alas, yet lives within me. He has not yet been entirely crucified; he is not yet entirely dead. He still lusts strongly against the spirit, and he will not leave the kingdom of my soul in peace. But You, Who can command the power of the sea and calm the tumult of its waves, arise and help me. Scatter the nations that delight in war; crush them in Your sight. Show forth I beg, Your wonderful works and let Your right hand be glorified, because for me there is no other hope or refuge except in You, O Lord, my God."

**Definition:**

Divine Wisdom - Wisdom believed to come from God, providing guidance and insight which is beyond human understanding.

**Scripture:**

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

Proverbs 2:6

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Galatians 5:24

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

John 14:6

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Romans 8:6

The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

**Concept:**

Prioritizing spiritual wisdom and fulfillment in God over worldly desires and temporary pleasures.

**Discussion:**

How do you personally navigate the tension between pursuing worldly pleasures and seeking spiritual fulfillment? What steps do you take to prioritize spiritual wisdom over the fleeting attractions of the world?

In what ways do you see the pursuit of worldly desires and the neglect of spiritual growth impacting individuals and society today? How can a shift in focus from the material to the spiritual realm lead to personal growth and a deeper sense of fulfillment?

Reflecting on the concept of delight in the Creator versus delight in the created, how can we cultivate a mindset that allows us to appreciate God's creation while keeping Him at the center of our lives? How does recognizing the difference between the eternal and the temporary impact our daily choices and actions?