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

**BOOK THREE:** INTERNAL CONSOLATION

### **Chapter 32:** Self-Denial and the Renunciation of Evil Appetites

**Quote:**

"The Voice of Christ

MY CHILD, you can never be perfectly free unless you completely renounce self, for all who seek their own interest and who love themselves are bound in fetters. They are unsettled by covetousness and curiosity, always searching for ease and not for the things of Christ, often devising and framing that which will not last, for anything that is not of God will fail completely.

Hold to this short and perfect advice, therefore: give up your desires and you will find rest. Think upon it in your heart, and when you have put it into practice you will understand all things.

The Disciple

But this, Lord, is not the work of one day, nor is it mere child's play; indeed, in this brief sentence is included all the perfection of holy persons.

The Voice of Christ

My child, you should not turn away or be downcast when you hear the way of the perfect. Rather you ought to be spurred on the more toward their sublime heights, or at least be moved to seek perfection.

I would this were the case with you--that you had progressed to the point where you no longer loved self but simply awaited My bidding and his whom I have placed as father over you. Then you would please Me very much, and your whole life would pass in peace and joy. But you have yet many things which you must give up, and unless you resign them entirely to Me you will not obtain that which you ask.

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold, fire-tried, that thou mayest be made rich" --rich in heavenly wisdom which treads underfoot all that is low. Put aside earthly wisdom, all human self-complacency.

I have said: exchange what is precious and valued among men for that which is considered contemptible. For true heavenly wisdom--not to think highly of self and not to seek glory on earth--does indeed seem mean and small and is well-nigh forgotten, as many men praise it with their mouths but shy far away from it in their lives. Yet this heavenly wisdom is a pearl of great price, which is hidden from many."

**Definition:**

Self-denial - The conscious and intentional act of renouncing one's own desires, interests, and ego in order to fully submit to God's will and to follow Christ more closely.

**Scripture:**

Matthew 16:24-25 (NIV):

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.'"

**Concept:**

By practicing self-denial, individuals can cultivate humility, patience, and a deeper sense of dependence on God. It is through this intentional act of denying self that one can experience inner transformation, spiritual growth, and a closer relationship with God. Thomas à Kempis emphasizes the importance of self-denial as a pathway to true discipleship and as a means to find lasting peace, joy, and fulfillment in God.

**Discussion:**

How do you personally practice self-denial in your daily life as a Christian? What challenges do you face in renouncing self-interest and following after Christ, and how do you overcome them?

In what ways do you think self-denial can lead to greater spiritual growth and a deeper relationship with God? Can you share any personal experiences where practicing self-denial has brought you closer to God and enriched your faith journey?

Thomas à Kempis suggests that self-denial is essential for finding lasting peace and joy in Christ. How do you interpret the relationship between self-denial, inner peace, and true joy in the context of your own spiritual beliefs and experiences? How can the practice of self-denial impact one's overall well-being and sense of fulfillment?