

The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis

BOOK THREE: INTERNAL CONSOLATION

Chapter 45: All Men Are Not to Be Believed, for It Is Easy to Err in Speech

Quote:

“The Disciple

GRANT me help in my needs, O Lord, for the aid of man is useless. How often have I failed to find faithfulness in places where I thought I possessed it! And how many times I have found it where I least expected it! Vain, therefore, is hope in men, but the salvation of the just is in You, O God. Blessed be Your name, O Lord my God, in everything that befalls us.

We are weak and unstable, quickly deceived and changed. Who is the man that is able to guard himself with such caution and care as not sometimes to fall into deception or perplexity? He who confides in You, O Lord, and seeks You with a simple heart does not fall so easily. And if some trouble should come upon him, no matter how entangled in it he may be, he will be more quickly delivered and comforted by You. For You will not forsake him who trusts in You to the very end.

Rare is the friend who remains faithful through all his friend's distress. But You, Lord, and You alone, are entirely faithful in all things; other than You, there is none so faithful.

Oh, how wise is that holy soul who said: "My mind is firmly settled and founded in Christ." If that were true of me, human fear would not so easily cause me anxiety, nor would the darts of words disturb. But who can foresee all things and provide against all evils? And if things foreseen have often hurt, can those which are unlooked for do otherwise than wound us gravely? Why, indeed, have I not provided better for my wretched self? Why, too, have I so easily kept faith in others? We are but men, however, nothing more than weak men, although we are thought by many to be, and are called, angels.

In whom shall I put my faith, Lord? In whom but You? You are the truth which does not deceive and cannot be deceived. Every man, on the other hand, is a liar, weak, unstable, and likely to err, especially in words, so that one ought not to be too quick to believe even that which seems, on the face of it, to sound true. How wise was Your warning to beware of men; that a man's enemies are those of his own household; that we should not believe if anyone says: "Behold he is here, or behold he is there."

I have been taught to my own cost, and I hope it has given me greater caution, not greater folly. "Beware," they say, "beware and keep to yourself what I tell you!" Then while I keep silent, believing that the matter is secret, he who asks me to be silent cannot remain silent himself, but immediately betrays both me and himself, and goes his way. From tales of this kind and from such careless men protect me, O Lord, lest I fall into their hands and into their ways. Put in my mouth words that are true and steadfast and keep far from me the crafty tongue, because what I am not willing to suffer I ought by all means to shun.

Oh, how good and how peaceful it is to be silent about others, not to believe without discrimination all that is said, not easily to report it further, to reveal oneself to few, always to seek You as the discernor of hearts, and not to be blown away by every wind of words, but to wish that all things, within and beyond us, be done according to the pleasure of Thy will.

How conducive it is for the keeping of heavenly grace to fly the gaze of men, not to seek abroad things which seem to cause admiration, but to follow with utmost diligence those which give fervor and amendment of life! How many have been harmed by having their virtue known and praised too hastily! And how truly profitable it has been when grace remained hidden during this frail life, which is all temptation and warfare!"

Definition:

God's Faithfulness - God's consistency, reliability, and trustworthiness in fulfilling His promises and being true to His character

Scripture:

Psalms 118:8

It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans.

Psalms 62:8

Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Lamentations 3:22-23

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

2 Timothy 2:13

If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself."

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

1 Corinthians 1:9

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it."

Concept:

God's faithfulness as a source of strength in an unpredictable world

Discussion:

When have you trusted someone who did not follow through on their word or their commitment? How have you experienced God being faithful to his word and his promises?

How does the passage's reflection on human frailty and the unpredictability of human commitments resonate with your own experiences or observations in life?

In what ways do the Bible verses provided offer hope and encouragement in times of uncertainty or when facing challenges that test your faith?

How can we cultivate a deeper sense of trust in God's faithfulness amid the shifting sands of human relationships and the uncertainties of the world around us?