

(1.7) Avoiding Vain Hope and Pride

Thus says the LORD: Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who makes flesh his strength¹; foolish is he who trusts in created things. Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of Christ or even to be poor in this world for his sake.

Trust wholeheartedly in Yahweh, put no faith in your own perception; acknowledge him in every course you take, and he will see that your paths are smooth.² Act upon your problems in such a way that is pleasing to the Lord and your good actions will bring his assistance. Don't trust in your own cleverness or that of other people; rather trust in the grace of God which helps the humble but humbles the proud giving them an opportunity to change. If you are truly wise and understanding then show your works by a good life in the humility³ that comes from wisdom.⁴

Glorify God who not only gives all things but even desires to give himself to you. Don't be awed by riches and powerful friends. Don't boast of your stature or beautiful body because sickness or accidents often strike most unexpectedly and old age overcomes everyone. Don't take pride in your wit and abilities for such would offend the giver of all these gifts. Don't consider yourself better than others for God will hold you accountable.

Don't be proud of what you think are your good deeds because God's judgments differ from those of man's and God is often displeased with what pleases people. *The LORD pulls down the house of the proud.⁵*

If you are good and virtuous believe that there is greater goodness in many others and this will help you maintain a humble posture. *Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.⁶*

It will not hurt you to consider yourself below everyone else, even if in reality you are not. But think of yourself above even one other and it could cause you great harm.

The humble person has deep peace but the proud person's heart is always troubled with envy and easily aroused to anger and resentment.

This article is based on Book 1, Chapter 7 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal (layperson's) reflection on his writing; if any of it helps give credit to Thomas of Kempis; if any of it fails the responsibility is mine. (rfm)

¹ Jeremiah 17:5

² Proverbs 3:5-6

³ The term "humility" comes from the Latin word *humilitas*, a noun related to the adjective *humilis*, which may be translated as "humble", but also as "grounded", "from the earth", or "low", since it derives in turns from *humus* (earth). Because the concept of **humility** addresses intrinsic self-worth, it is emphasized in the realm of religious practice and ethics where the notion is often made more precise. (Wikipedia)

⁴ James 3:13

⁵ Proverbs 15:25

⁶ James 4:10