

(2.6) A Good Conscience

A good conscience sustains joyfulness and can bear much pain even in times of adversity whereas an evil conscience is always fearful and uneasy; *the wicked is in torment all his days.*¹ You can assuredly be in peace if your heart is pure; never rejoice except when you have done well.

The wicked never have true joy nor do they have inward peace; *There is no peace for the wicked, says the LORD.*² And yet they say: *We are in peace and no evil shall overcome us and no one shall dare harm us! In their wickedness they mistakenly rely on the LORD, saying, "Is not the LORD in the midst of us? No evil can come upon us!"*³ Do not believe them for *God shall send against them the fury of his wrath*⁴ and their evilness shall be brought to naught.



To glory in misfortune is not impossible for him who loves; this kind of glory embraces the cross of the Lord. Short-lived and followed by sorrows is the glory given and received by men whereas the glory of good men resides in their consciences and needs not the consoling words of others.

The joy of the just is from God and in God; they rejoice in the truth. *Nothing gives me greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.*⁵ The pursuit after true and everlasting glory seeks what is eternal and not what is temporal. Those that seek worldly glory, or from their hearts do not spurn it, show themselves to have but little love for the splendor of heaven.

He will have great peacefulness of heart who cares nothing for praise or blame attributed to him by others. He will be at ease and at peace whose conscience is clean. You are not the more holy for being praised, nor worse for being blamed. What you are, that you are; nor can words, yours, or those of others, make you greater in God's sight. If you consider what you are inwardly you will not care what others say of you. Man looks at external appearances, but God sees the heart. Others may only consider your actions, but God weighs the intentions that accompany your actions. The mark of a humble soul is to always do what is right and to esteem oneself of small account. To simply let go of consolation from any creature is a sign of great purity and of inward confidence.

¹ Job 15:20A

² Isaiah 48:22

³ Micah 3:11

⁴ Job 20:23

⁵ 3John 1:4

He that seeks no outward acknowledgment for himself shows plainly that he has committed himself wholly to God. St. Paul says, *For it is not the one who recommends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord recommends.*⁶

To walk with God spiritually and not be attached to worldly affection; this is the state of the truly spiritual man. *Then with all this, pray to God to make your steps firm in the true path.*⁷

This article is based on Book 2, Chapter 6 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a translation, and there are many of those, but a personal 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)

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⁶ 2Corinthians 10:18

⁷ Sirach 37:15