

(3.5) Divine Love's Effects

I bless You, O heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, because You have promised to be mindful of me, poor servant as I am. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us rein our every affliction.*¹ I give thanks to You that when needed You refresh me with your consolations, unworthy as I am of any such solace. I bless You always and glorify You, together with your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, now and forever.

*When your love enters my heart all within me exults with joy. You, O Lord, are a shield around me; my glory, you keep my head high*²; *Your testimonies are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.*³ *For you are my fortress, my refuge in time of trouble.*⁴

But because I am yet weak in love and inadequate in virtue, I have great need to be strengthened and comforted by You, have You visit me often, and train me with Your holy ways. Deliver me from evil passions and cure my heart of all muddled affections so that inwardly healed and cleansed, I may become fit to love, strong to endure sorrows, and resolute in perseverance.

A great thing is love, a great good every way in that it alone lightens every burden and endures in the same way every inequity. It carries a burden without being burdened and makes every bitter thing sweet and savory. The noble love of Jesus urges a man to do great deeds and ever motivates him to desire that which is more perfect. Love motivates one to higher things and refuses to be held back by corrupt things. Love wills to be free and to be detached from all worldly affection, so that its inward spiritual vision is not hampered and that it suffers no entanglement in worldly wealth and confusion in adversity. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven and on earth; *for love is from God*⁵ and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.

The lover leaps, runs, and rejoices, is free and unrestrained. He gives all for all, because he rests above all created things in the Highest One from whom flows and proceeds all that is good. He does not regard the gifts, but transcending all good things he turns to the Giver. Love knows no bounds but grows zealous beyond all measure. Love feels no burdens, thinks lightly of hard work, aims beyond its strengths, complains not of impossibility for in faith it conceives that all things are possible and available to it. Love therefore, is equal to any task and succeeds while he that does not love slips and falls.

Love keeps watch and is always aware. Though wearied, it is not done in, though constricted it still accomplishes, though disturbed it can still act, but like a living flame the way upwards is

¹ 2 Corinthians 1:3

² Psalm 3:4

³ Psalm 119:111

⁴ Psalm 59:17

⁵ 1John 4:7

opened for safe passage. If any man loves, he knows what this quiet voice says. For that ardent prayer of the soul reaches the ears of God and says: My God and my Love! You are mine and I am Yours.

Deepen my love for You, that I may learn to love in a deep spiritual sense, and to rise above my worldly self with Your help. Let me sing love's new song; let me follow You, my Beloved, to the higher places. Let my soul empty itself in Your praises, rejoicing especially in love. Let me love You more than myself, and myself only for You. And in You let me love all who truly love You, as is commanded in the law of love which emanates from You.

Love is swift, sincere, devoted, cheerful, strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly, and never self-seeking. For when a man only seeks self-interest, then he falls from love. Love is cautious, humble, upright; not weak, not intent on vain things, nor is it fickle. It is sober, chaste, steadfast, tranquil, and safeguards all the senses. Love is submissive and obedient to superiors; in its own eyes mean and contemptible, towards God devout and thankful, always trusting and hoping in Him, even when times are difficult; for there is no living in love without some sorrow. I come with much baggage but only You can help me unpack it the right way.

Whoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his Beloved, he is not worthy to be called a lover. A lover must be willing to embrace all that is hard and bitter for the sake of the Beloved and never allow himself to be turned away from Him by any obstacles.

This article is based on Book 3, Chapter 5 of Thomas of Kempis' writing, "Imitation of Christ." It is not a direct 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)

<https://melkaplace.com>