

3/ The Kiss: Symbol of Peace & Friendship

B. Peace from Friendship w/ Lord

a. Imperfect Kinds of Friendships w/Him

Ch. 2, 19-30

Meditations on the Song of Songs

by Teresa of Avila

Treats of **Nine kinds of false peace** presented to the soul by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Explains the holiness of the religious state. This holiness leads to the true peace desired by the bride in the Song of Songs.

19. ... That we might try diligently to please this Lord and King of ours! But **how badly these persons repay this friendship.** They turn so **quickly into mortal enemies!**

How great is the mercy of God. Where would we find a friend so patient?

If a friend commits one fault, it is never erased from the other's memory, nor do the two manage to have a friendship as trusting as before.

Yet, how often will souls **fail** in their **friendship with our Lord**? How many years does He wait for us? You, Lord, show us so much pity ...

This **infidelity** is a **dangerous state**. We frequently see people dying in this state without **confession**.

May His Majesty deliver us from being in so dangerous a state.

20. There is **another friendship** stronger than this. It is had by persons who guard themselves from **offending the Lord by mortal sin**. Those who have reached this stage have attained much but do fall occasionally.

They care little about **venial sins**; they commit many daily and so are close to committing mortal sins ... Take great care not to grow careless about venial sins however small ... To use the remedy (confession) after the fact is of course good, but not as an excuse to sin.

21. It is very important to have a **pure conscience** so that nothing hinders asking for the **perfect friendship** of the bride. The friendship just mentioned is **not** the one the bride asks for. It is **suspect** for many reasons.

Given over to **comforts** and **lukewarmness**, these souls do not know how to **distinguish** between a **venial** and **mortal sin**. They feel that they do not commit the serious sins they see in others--- therefore a **lack of perfect humility**.

They judge others as wicked... It seems to them that they do not do any of the bad things they see others doing, giving themselves **greater latitude** for their enjoyments.

They recite their vocal prayer, though not well, as their consciences are not delicate.

22. There is **another kind of friendship** and **peace our Lord** begins to give some persons who are totally committed to not offending Him in anything, but do not withdraw from the occasions.

They have their **time for prayer**. Our Lord gives them **tenderness** and **tears**. They don't however want to give up the **enjoyments** of this life. They want to live a **well-ordered life** to live here below in **tranquility**. They will be doing enough if they continue in the practice of virtue. If they don't withdraw though, from the **satisfactions** and **pleasures** of the world,

they will become **lax** in walking the Lord's path. There are great **enemies** we must defend ourselves from.

This, daughters, is **not** the friendship the bride desires, neither should you desire it. Turn away always from any little occasion, however small, if you want the **soul to grow and live securely**.

23. I am saying these things to you so that you will understand the **dangers** that lie in **not** turning resolutely from all worldly things. In turning from them, we spare ourselves many faults and trials.

There are so many ways our Lords **begins to exchange friendship with souls** ... Some persons bewilder me. It seems they have everything to be friends with God.

A lady I know ... seemed quite perfect ... She had never married and lived in constant solitude.

Since I saw these **virtues**, it seemed to be the effects of an **advanced soul** and of **deep prayer**. In the beginning, I esteemed this lady highly...

24. Over time, I began to understand that all was **peaceful** as long as her **self-interest** was not affected. Though she tolerated things said against her, she would not tolerate anything said against her **reputation**, her **honor**. She was overcome by this misery, eager to know all said against them. She was also very fond of her comfort.

She embellished all this to make it appear she was free from sin... Almost everyone considered her a saint... **She was in fact a saint in her own opinion** ... I beg the Lord to give us **light**.

25. Praise Him, daughters, very much for He brought you to the monastery where... we

cannot be **deceived** as much as can those living in their own homes ... where there is no one to inform them of their faults.

I have never seen this in monasteries for souls must do what they are told. While people living in their own homes cannot know their faults... In the end they do their own will ... and do not exercise themselves in mortification.

Let us exclude those to whom our Lord has given **light** for many years. These persons seek someone who will inform them of their **faults** and to whom they may **submit**. Their **great humility** leads them to have little confidence in themselves however learned they may be.

26. There are others who have left all for the Lord ... He has given them **light** about how miserable these things are.

But they are too attached to their **honor**. They wouldn't want to do anything that wasn't **acceptable to both to the Lord and men**. It is not always easy to reconcile the two.

The trouble is that without one being aware the **interests** of the world almost always **gain** more than do those of God. These souls grieve over anything said against them. They do not **embrace the cross** but rather **drag it along**. It hurts and wearies them and **breaks them to pieces**. However, if the cross is **loved**, it is **easy to bear**; this is certain.

27. No, neither is this the friendship the bride seeks... Everything should be **wearisome** to you; if you have given up the world, its comforts, joys, and riches, though false, in the end are pleasing, what do you fear?

Look how you fail to understand, for to free yourselves from the **bitterness** a word can cause you, you **burden** yourselves with a **thousand worries** and **obligations**. There are so many of them ...

28. There are other souls no longer concerned with what **others say** or about their **honor** ... They begin to make **progress** but then **falter** on the road. They are not exercised in **mortification** or in **denying their own will**, so they **never overcome** their **fear**.

Since they are determined to suffer everything, it may seem that the job is done. But in serious matters concerning the Lord's honor the Lord, their concerns for their own honor revives. They do not seem to understand. They think they do not fear the world but fear only God.

29. These souls would not throw themselves into the sea as did Saint Peter. However, in their calm they will draw souls to the Lord, but not by putting themselves in danger. Nor does the faith they have do much to help them carry out their resolutions with deeds.

Outside of religious life, where it is known that there will be no lack, we see few in the world, entrust their livelihood to God ... How many are there who will not give up what they have unless it be with security. The **faintheartedness** of these souls does them harm. It is good for them to have **great desires** since they cannot do great works. Once the Lord brings them to so great state, let them serve Him through it, and not be shy ...

30. Thus, my daughters, if the Lord has brought you to this state, little is lacking for you **to receive the peace and friendship**

the bride asks for. Don't fail to beg the Lord for it with continual tears and desires. Do your part that He might give it to you. Realize that the religious state itself is **not** the **peace** and **friendship** the bride asks for, even though the Lord grants a great favor to the one He has brought to it.

For only after one has been occupied in much prayer, penance, humility, and many other virtues, will that peace come. May the Lord always be praised for He gives all, amen.