

PREFACE by ST. TERESA

1 I have often found by experience, to say nothing of what I have read about it in several books, the great benefit a soul derives from obedience. From obedience, we advance both in virtue and in humility. Fear is an assurance, which while we live we should have, to prevent us from straying from the path to heaven. Herein is found that quiet, so much prized by souls desirous of serving God. If they truly resign themselves to this holy obedience, and subject their understanding to it, so as to have no other will but that of their confessor; and if they be Religious, that of their superior, the devil ceases to attack them with his continual scruples and vexations, finding he loses rather than gains. And besides, the turbulent motions of our minds, which delight in doing their own will, and even in subjecting reason in things that please us, cease by obedience. Remember that we have deliberately surrendered our will to the will of God, choosing, as a means, to subject ourselves to one who holds his place. Since, then, our Lord, in His goodness, has given me the light to know the great treasure contained in this precious virtue, I have tried to acquire it, though weakly and imperfectly. Often the little virtue I see in myself causes me uneasiness because I know I have not fully accomplished some of the things entrusted to me. May His Divine Majesty supply whatever is defective in this my present undertaking.

2 While living in the monastery of St. Joseph at Avila, in the year 1562 (the same year the monastery was founded), I was commanded by Father Garcia, of Toledo, of the Order of St. Dominic who was then my confessor, to write the Foundation of that house, with several other things, which (if published) whoever reads them will know what they are. But being now at Salamanca, in the year 1573 (it is eleven years since I wrote the first Foundation), my present confessor, Father Ripalda, Rector of the Society of Jesus, having read the book of the first Foundation thought that it might bring much honor to our Lord, if I wrote the Foundations of the other seven monasteries, which, by the goodness of our Lord, have since been erected. He ordered me to do so and also to give an account of the beginning of the monasteries belonging to the Discalced Fathers of this First Rule. But because this undertaking seemed to me to be impossible, on account of the many duties I had to attend to and of the Letters I was obliged to write, as well as other important business commanded me by my superiors, I was recommending myself to God, being somewhat troubled on account of my poor abilities and weak state of health (for even without this burden, I seemed unable to perform my other duties by reason of my natural ineptitude), when our Lord said to me, "*Daughter, obedience gives strength.*"*

Questions:

Does obedience mean giving up your freedom?

Who does St. Teresa want to obey? God *and* Man? God *or* Man?

How can obedience give you strength?