

The Book of Her Life

The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila

Volume One

Chapter 10, Transition Chapter

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Chapter 10: Begins to tell about the favors the Lord granted her in prayer, of how we ourselves can help, and how important it is that we understand the graces the Lord gives us. Asks the one to whom this is sent to keep secret what she writes about from here on, for they commanded her to speak so personally about the favors the Lord grants her.

1-...it used to happen when I **represented Christ** within me in order to **place myself in his presence**, or even while **reading**, that a **feeling of the presence of God** would come upon me unexpectedly so that I could in no way doubt he **was within me or I totally immersed in him**. This did not occur as a vision...the **soul is suspended** ... it seems completely outside itself. The **will** loves, the **memory**...is almost **lost**; the **intellect** does not work discursively...but is **lost**...it is as though it is amazed by all it understands because God desires that it understand...that in fact **it understands nothing**.

2-Before this, I felt habitually a **tenderness** that can **in part be acquired**, a **favor that is neither entirely of the senses nor entirely spiritual**. Everything is given by God but it seems **we can help a great deal to receive tenderness** by considering our lowliness and the ingratitude we have shown towards God, the many things he did for us, his Passion with heavy sorrows, his life so afflicted and by delighting in his works, his grandeur, how he loves us and in the many things that he who truly wants to improve spiritually is often able to find all around him...If some **love** accompanies this activity, the soul is gladdened, the heart is touched with **tenderness**, and **tears** begin to flow...we are unable to resist them. Apparently, his Majesty repays us for that bit of care with a gift...

3-...these joys of prayer must be like those of heaven...Truly, in the beginning when God grants it this favor, it almost seems to the soul that there is nothing more for it to desire, and it considers itself well repaid for all its service. It is more than right, for one of these tears... cannot be bought in my opinion with all the trials in the world; for much is gained by these tears. And what greater gain is there

than to have **evidence** that we are **pleasing God**? Thus, he who reaches this point praises God much and knows he is indebted...if he doesn't **turn back** he has been **chosen** for **God's own house and kingdom**.

4-...Let us understand the **real fact**: God gives us gifts without any **merit** on our part. And let us **thank** our Majesty for them, because if we don't, we will not **awaken to love**... Let us believe that he who gives us the blessings will give us the grace so that when the devil begins to tempt us...we shall understand and have the fortitude to resist... if we walk with sincerity before God aiming at pleasing him and not man.

5-...We love a person more when we often recall the good works he does for us...why shouldn't I often consider that I used to speak of vanities; and the Lord has now given me the desire to speak of nothing but him. Here is a **jewel**...in recalling it is a **gift**...we are compelled to love the giver. **For love is the genuine fruit of prayer when prayer is rooted in humility**...we have no right to any of this, and to know the generosity of the Lord...

6-It is necessary to draw out strength for **service** ... as the Lord gives these riches on condition we use them well, if we do not use the **treasures** well...he will take them from us...and give the **jewels** to someone who will **display** them and **gain profit** from them both for himself and others.

How can anyone benefit and share his gifts if he doesn't understand that he is rich... By these gifts the Lord gives us fortitude... If a person doesn't have, along with a living faith, some pledge of the love God has for him, he will not desire to be despised and belittled by everyone and have all the other great virtues that the perfect possess. For our nature is so dead we go after what we see in the present. These favors awaken faith and strengthen it....

7-...As for what I say from here on...I do not desire that they tell who experienced these things...I will write everything as best I can so as to **remain unknown**...These persons so learned and serious in mind will suffice for giving credibility to any good thing if the Lord gives me the grace to say it, because if it is good it will be his and not mine. For I am without learning...only those who commanded me to write this know I am writing it...I am almost stealing time, because it prevents me from spinning and this is a poor house with many things to be done. For even though the Lord may have given me greater capability and memory...I retain very little

of it. Thus, if I should say something good, the Lord wills it for some good...

8-And with the thought that your Reverence will do this that I am asking you...**I am writing freely**...And thus to what amounts to more than simply giving an account of my life... Your Reverence may judge—since you asked that I write some statement about the favors granted me by God in prayer—as to its **conformity with the truths of our holy Catholic faith**... I shall speak of what is taking place in me so that when it is conformed to this faith, it may bring profit to your Reverence: and if it is not, you will free my soul from illusion ... I have always tried to find someone who would give me light.

9-As much as I desire to speak clearly about these **matters of prayer**, they will be really obscure for anyone who has not had **experience**. I'll speak of some things ...that are **obstacles to progress** along this path and other things in which there is **danger**. These things I'll say from what the **Lord has taught me through experience** and through discussions with very learned men and persons who have lived the spiritual life for many years. It will be seen that within only twenty-seven years in which I have practiced prayer his Majesty has given me the experience-- along with my walking amid so many stumbling blocks and so poorly on this path... May his Majesty be blessed for everything...for he knows well that in writing this I have no other aim than that he be praised ...

Amen