

# The Book of Her Life

4 Ways to Water the Garden

**4th Degree of Prayer**

by **St. Teresa of Avila**

## Chapter 18

Discusses the fourth degree of prayer. Begins to offer an excellent explanation of the great dignity the Lord bestows upon the soul in this state. Gives much encouragement to those who engage in prayer that they might strive to attain so high a stage since it can be reached on earth, although not by merit but through God's goodness. This should be read attentively, for the explanation is presented in a very subtle way and there are many noteworthy things.

1-...In the **previous prayer**, the soul was **conscious** of the world, it didn't feel that it was **totally dead**... The soul has its senses by which it feels its solitude and understands that it is in the world...

...in these latter modes of prayer the gardener's work is accompanied by so much glory and consolation for the soul that it would never want to abandon this prayer... In this **fourth water** the soul **isn't in possession of its senses**, but it rejoices without understanding what it is rejoicing in...All the senses are occupied in this joy...none is free ...

In this fourth water the soul **rejoices** incomparably more; but it can show much less since no power remains in the body, nor ... the soul ... everything would be a great obstacle, a torment and a hindrance to its repose...If this prayer is the **union of all the faculties**, the soul is unable to communicate its joy ....while in prayer... **if it were able to it wouldn't be union.**

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2- How this prayer they call **union** comes about and what it is, I don't know how to explain...I wouldn't know the proper vocabulary...

3-What I'm attempting to explain is what the **soul feels** when it is in this divine union...that you bestow such favors on souls that have offended You...when I think about this I am unable to continue...

4-...You are not accustomed, Lord, to bestowing on a soul ...favors like these unless for the **profit of many**...

6-..I intend to speak of the **graces and effects** that are left in the soul, of whether it can do something on its own to reach so great a state, and of what this something might be.

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7-The **elevation of the spirit**, or **joining with heavenly love** ...takes place within this very union. The union...is different from the elevation... the Lord works differently in each case. In the **flight of the spirit** this difference is seen by a much greater increase in **detachment from creatures**...a small fire is just as much a fire as a large one. Through this example one can see the difference between union and elevation of the spirit...anyone who has reached the experience of raptures will understand the difference well...

8- ....it is my intention to **attract souls to so high a blessing** ...but this prayer is very difficult to explain...

9- Let us speak of this **heavenly water that in its abundance soaks and saturates this entire garden** ...This water from heaven often comes when the gardener is least expecting it....

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9- cont'd.... True, in the beginning it almost always occurs after a **long period of mental prayer**... He has seen the soul ...striving with the **intellect** and the **will** and all its strength to see God and please Him, He desires to reward it even in this life...one moment is enough to repay all the trials that can be suffered in life!

10- While the soul is seeking God, it feels ...that everything is almost **fading away** through a **kind of swoon** in which breathing and all the bodily energies gradually fail. This experience comes about in such a way that one cannot even stir the hands without a lot of effort...he receives no benefit from the senses...all the **external energy** is **lost** and that of the soul is increased so that it might better enjoy its glory.

11- This prayer causes no harm...The external effects are so apparent that one cannot doubt that a great event has taken place...

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12- ... in the beginning this **prayer passes so quickly**...that neither these exterior signs nor the failure of the senses are very noticeable ...but the soul understands that the sun's brightness was so powerful that it **melted the soul away** ... the **total time** that the soul remains in this **suspension of all the faculties** is **very short** ...a **half hour** ...would be a very long time. ...since there is no sensory consciousness one finds it hard to know what is happening. ...the will holds high the banner; the **other two faculties** quickly go back to being a bother. Since the will remains quiet, the others are again suspended for a little while—then return again to life.

13- In this way a person can and does spend several hours in prayer. Once the two faculties have begun to **taste the divine wine** ...they easily lose themselves to gain much more; they accompany the will and all three rejoice. But this loss of them all and the suspension of the **imagination**, also completely...

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13- cont'd...last only a short while; yet these **faculties** don't return to **themselves so completely and are capable of remaining for several hours as though** bewildered while God gradually gather them again to Himself.

14- Let us come to what the soul experiences here interiorly ...after Communion I wanted to write about what the soul did during this time. The Lord spoke these words to me: **"The soul detaches itself from everything...to abide in me more. It is no longer the soul that lives but I. Since it cannot comprehend what it understands, there is an understanding by not understanding."**

...What happens is so obscure...I can only say that the soul appears to be joined to God, and there remains such certitude about this union that the soul cannot help believing in the truth of it. In this prayer all the faculties fail and they are so suspended...that in now way does one think they are working ....

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14- cont'd...This **bothersome little moth**, the **memory**, gets its wings burnt here; it can no longer move. The **will** is fully occupied in loving ...The **intellect**, if it understands, doesn't understand how it understands; at least it can't comprehend anything of what it understands.

15- In the beginning ... I didn't know that God was in all things ... and I was so troubled...but a very learned man from the order of St. Dominic told me that God was present and how He communicates Himself to us; ...it should be noted that this heavenly water...leaves **great fruits in the soul**...



## Chapter 19

Continues on the same subject. Begins to explain the effects this degree of prayer produces in the soul. Strongly urges souls not to turn back even if they fall again after receiving this favor, and not to give up prayer. Speaks of the harm that results from abandoning prayer. This chapter is very important and most consoling for the weak and for sinners.

1-This prayer and union leave the greatest tenderness in the soul in such a way that it would want to be consumed not from pain but from the joyous tears... It finds itself bathed in them without having felt them ...The driving force of that **fire** is quenched by a **water** that makes the **fire increase** ...sometimes I was so taken out of myself that I didn't know if I was dreaming...

2-The soul becomes so **courageous** that if ...it were cut in pieces for God, it would be greatly consoled. Such prayer ... is the beginning **of contempt for the world** because of a clear perception of the **world's vanity**. The soul is much improved... than in the previous degree of prayer. Its **humility** is deeper...it sees plainly...that it played no part in obtaining the **gift**...The soul sees its own misery...It remains alone with Him. What has it to do but love Him?

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2- cont'd...Afterward, with striking truth, its **past life** and the **great mercy of God** are shown to it....it perceives that it **merits hell** and yet it is **chastised with glory**...It consumes itself in the praises of God...May you be blessed my Lord...O Joy of the angels, for having desired to raise up a worm so vile!

3- This progress in **virtue** remains for some time with the soul... the **fruits** are not its own and it can begin to **distribute** them since it has no need of them. It starts to show signs of a soul that guards **heavenly treasures** and has the desire to share them. It begins to be of benefit to its **neighbors**... the **fragrance of the flowers attracts others**. The soul understands that it has virtues and its neighbors see the desirable fruit...if the **soil is well-cultivated** by trials, persecutions, criticisms, and illnesses...and softened by living in great detachment from self-interest, the water soaks it ...and it is almost never dry...

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3- cont'd...But if the gardener becomes **careless** and the Lord, out of His goodness, does not desire to let the rains come again, the garden can be considered as **lost**...Weak souls though should never despair or fail to trust in the greatness of God. Even though they may fall...they ought not grow discouraged if they don't want to become completely lost. For **tears gain all things: one water draws down the other.**

4-That one ought not to grow discouraged is one of the reasons that encouraged me...No one who has begun to practice prayer should become discouraged...I believe matters become worse if one abandons prayer and doesn't amend his evil ways. But if he doesn't abandon it , he may believe that prayer will bring him to the **harbor of light**....I spent so long thinking it was a **lack of humility** to practice prayer and so I abandoned it for a year and a half...and doing this...

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4- cont'd... I put myself right in hell...the devil knows that he has lost the soul that practices prayer perseveringly...and all the falls he helps it to take assist it afterward ...to make a great leap forward in the Lord's service...

5- O my Jesus! What a sight it is when You through Your mercy return to offer Your hand and raise up a soul that has fallen in sin after having reached this stage...Here it doesn't dare raise its eyes...Here it becomes a devotee of the Queen of Heaven so that she might appease you...Here in approaching the sacraments ...it praises You because You have left such a **medicine and ointment for our wounds** and because this medicine not only covers these wounds but **takes them away completely**...

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6-...You do not grant very holy persons the favors you grant me...You keep the **reward** so as to give it to them all together and that I need this reward because of my **weakness...**

7-...You kept me, out of your goodness from offending You...and You began, Lord, to open Your **treasures** to Your handmaid ...when the will and readiness was in me to receive them...

8-Once the others knew about the **treasures**...the criticism and persecution began...they said I was trying to make myself out to be a saint...and capable of causing a great deal of harm ... They revealed truths to me because you permitted this, Lord.

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9- Once in the midst of such persecutions...I began to think ...that there are many that are very good servants of Yours and yet do not receive these gifts and favors You grant me ...You answered me, Lord: “Serve me and don’t bother about such things.” This was the first **locution** I heard You speak to me, and so I was very frightened... may I be consumed in this prayer.

10- ...Where, my Lord, did I think I could find a remedy save in you? ... the devil put the thought in my head to question how I could engage in prayer, and that it was enough for me to recite, like everyone else, my **vocal prayers**...he suggested that engaging in prayer showed a lack of reverence and little esteem for the favors of God...But to give up the practice of prayer was the greatest evil. May you be blessed Lord who came to my rescue.

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11-...during the time in which I was **without prayer** my life was much worse...there was a great disquiet within me...My soul saw that this world's pleasures were disgusting ... I never thought I would cease being determined to return to prayer –but I was waiting to be very purified of sin. Oh, how wrong was the direction in which I was going with this hope!

12-...A Dominican friar...woke me from this sleep...I advanced on the way, very gradually, by falling and rising. I don't think losing the way means anything else than giving up prayer. May God free us because of who He is!

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13- My experience explains...that even though a soul may reach the stage in which God grants it such wonderful favors in prayer, it should **not trust in itself**; it can fall. Nor should it place itself in the occasions of falling...the devil...deceives persons who are not advanced in the virtues, or mortified or detached. They are not strong enough ...This doctrine is excellent ...it is taught by God.

14- The devil plays a trick on the soul. It sees itself so close to God and perceives the difference between heavenly and earthly goods and the love the Lord shows it. It **gains confidence from this love**...and that it will not fall away from what it enjoys ...  
...believing it no longer has anything to fear, the soul places itself in dangers...it doesn't observe that it is still a fledgling ...and not yet ready to fly. The virtues are not yet strong, nor does it have the experience to recognize dangers, nor does it know the harm done by relying upon itself...



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15-**Self-reliance** is what destroyed me. For this reason...there is need of a **master** for discussions with spiritual persons. I truly believe that God will not fail to favor the soul that reaches this state, nor will He allow it to be lost, unless it completely abandons Him...When it falls, it should be extremely careful ...not to be tricked into giving up prayer, as I was...through false humility...it should trust in the goodness of God...He doesn't remember our ingratitude...nor does He remember the favors He bestowed on us as punishment ...on the contrary, all of this helps us to receive pardon more quickly ...He never tires of giving, nor can He exhaust His mercies. Let us not tire of receiving.

## Chapter 20

Discusses the difference between union and rapture. Explains the nature of rapture and tells something about the good possessed by the soul that the Lord in His kindness brings to this prayer of rapture. Tells of its effects. There is much to marvel over.

1-...the difference between **union** and **rapture**, or ... **elevation** or **flight of the spirit** or **transport**, which are all the same...it is also called **ecstasy**. The **advantage rapture** has over **union** is great. The **rapture** produces much stronger effects and causes many other phenomena. **Union** seems the same at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end; and it takes place in the **interior** of the soul. But since these **other phenomena** are of a **higher degree**, they produce their **effect** both **interiorly and exteriorly**...

2-Let us consider the **last water**...the Lord gathers up the soul...raises it completely out of itself...**ascends to heaven** and brings the soul along, and begins to **show it the things of the kingdom that He prepared for it**...

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3- In these **raptures** ...the soul is not animating the body...The **body** gradually **grows cold**...there is **no remedy** ...or ability to resist. In the **union**, since we are upon our earth...one can almost always **resist**...in these raptures most often there is no remedy...there frequently comes a force so swift and powerful that one sees and feels this cloud or mighty eagle raise it up and carry it aloft on its wings.

4- ...one ... sees oneself **carried away** and does not know where... This experience is **delightful** ... but causes **fear** in the beginning...the soul must be ... courageous to risk all...and abandon itself into God's hands... So forceful is this enrapturing that many times I wanted to resist ....especially when it happened in **public** ... I was afraid of being **deceived**....it carried off my **soul** and usually my **head**...and sometimes the **whole body** until it was **raised from the ground**.

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5- ...I begged the Lord not to give me any more favors that would involve any **outward show**...I was tired of being considered important...

6- ...when we resist out of **humility**, the very same **effects** are left in the soul as if we had given consent...

7- ...the **effects** are remarkable. First, there is a manifestation of the tremendous power of the Lord and of how **we are incapable**, when His Majesty desires, of holding back the body any more than the soul...we see that there is one who is superior...deep **humility** is impressed upon the soul...At first the **fear** is extreme when one sees one's body so **elevated** from the ground...because one's **feelings** are not lost; at least I was conscious...There is revealed a Majesty of one who can do this that makes one's hair stand on edge along with a fear of offending Him. Yet this fear is accompanied by a very **great love** for Him...

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8-The experience also leaves a **rare detachment**...the **spirit** is now completely **detached** from things...a new **estrangement** from earthly things is brought about, it makes life more arduous...

9- Afterwards there is a ...**deep pain**... note that these experiences occur much later than the **visions** and **revelations** ...The time I used to spend in prayer ... is now usually spent in this **painful prayer**... more or less intense...when intense, the pain experienced in the **impulses** ... is felt in the body and soul, a desire often comes unexpectedly ...that penetrates the whole soul at once, the soul begins to grow so **weary** that it ascends far above itself and all creatures. God places it in **a desert** so distant from all things...it desires only to **die in that solitude**... And when it seems to me that God is far away, He at times communicates...not to console but to show the reason the soul has for becoming **weary** in the absence of a blessing that in itself contains all blessings.

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10-... it consoled me to know that other persons...had experienced so **extreme a solitude**...it seems to me that the soul is not in itself, but on the **rooftop** of itself and of all created things because it seems to me to be even above the very superior part of the soul.

11-At other times it seems the soul goes about compelled to ask itself: where is your God?...It seems that the soul is **crucified** since **no consolation** comes to it from heaven, nor is it in **heaven**; neither does it desire any from **earth**, nor is it on earth...it is as though crucified **between** heaven and earth...That which comes from heaven causes more **torment** as the desire increases in such a way that the intense pain can take away sensory consciousness... the experience resembles the death agony with the difference that the suffering bears such great **happiness**...

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11- cont'd...It is an arduous, delightful martyrdom...the soul desires only its God ..neither the imagination nor the faculties function much when this takes place. Just as in union and rapture it is **joy** that suspends the faculties, so here it is **pain** that suspends **them**.

12- O Jesus, who could give an explanation of this prayer...when my soul is in the midst of these **anxious longings for death**...it **fears** it will not die...but once in the midst of theses longings, the soul would **desire** to spend the **remainder of its life in this suffering**, even though it is so excessive, a person cannot endure it...

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13-...a pain as great as this is sufficient to put an end to life, but I don't merit death...I am oblivious to everything in that **anxious longing to see God**, that **desert and solitude** seem to the soul better than all the companionship of the world. If anything could give the soul **consolation**, it would be to speak to someone who had suffered this torment...

14- ...this **pain is so intense** that the soul would not want solitude as before, nor would it want companionship with anyone other than one to whom it can complain. It is like a person suffocating with a rope around his neck and seeking to find relief. ...the pain places us in danger of death....The desire the body and the soul have of not being separated is what makes one beg help to get relief ...the soul seeks a remedy so as to live---against the will of the spirit, or its superior part, which would not want to break away from this pain.



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15-...The **rest** the soul had—in prayer and solitude—now usually consists of this **torment**. Yet the torment is so **pleasing** and ...so **valuable** that the soul desires this more than all the favors previously experienced. This experience seems **safer** because it follows the **way of the cross**. It contains in itself a very precious consolation...the **body** shares only in the **pain** ...the **soul** both **suffers and rejoices** on account of the **joy and satisfaction** the **suffering** gives. ...It must not be forgotten that this experience of pain comes after all those favors...

16-...the Lord told me not to fear and to esteem this **gift** more than all the others He had granted me. In this **pain the soul is purified** ....or purged like gold in the crucible so that the enameled gifts can be placed there in a better way and in this prayer it is **purged** of what it would have to be purged of in purgatory...

17- ...what I have been speaking about is **more than rapture**...

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18- Let us return to **raptures** and speak of what is more common in them....the body is left so light that all its weight is gone, ...when the body is in rapture it is as though **dead**, ...it remains in the position it was in when seized by the rapture...Once in a while the senses fail... sometimes ... completely ...but rarely and only for a short time ...Even though it cannot do anything, the soul doesn't fail to understand and hear as though it were listening to something coming from far off. I don't say that it hears and understands at the height of the rapture (as the faculties are lost ...because of their union with God) , for then it neither sees, nor hears, nor feels. But as I said speaking of the prayer of union this complete transformation of the soul in God lasts only a **short time**; but while it lasts, no faculty is felt, nor does the soul know what is happening in this prayer.

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19-...How is it that the rapture sometimes lasts so many hours and occurs so often? What happens ...is that the **rapture is experienced at intervals**. The soul is often absorbed in, or to put it better, the Lord absorbs the soul in Himself suspending all the faculties for a short while and holding only the **will suspended**... since the loving impulse and elevation of the spirit was great, the **will** remains absorbed... the other two restless faculties desire to hinder it...and the will has caused the sense faculties to be suspended because the Lord desires it so...

20-...when the **two faculties** are again **suspended in the union**, there isn't much to do...the soul...should not become disconsolate when it sees the body so bound for many hours and the **intellect** and the **memory** sometimes distracted...these faculties are ordinarily absorbed in the **praises of God** or in desiring to **comprehend** ....what they have undergone — and even for this they are not fully awake...

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21- I'm explaining this at great length because there are people to whom the Lord grants these favors...it may perhaps seem to their guides ...that these persons are as though **dead** during the rapture... frequently the body is made healthy and stronger—for it was really sick and full of great sufferings—something wonderful is given to it in that prayer...the body is now **obedient** to what the soul desires. After the soul returns to itself—if the rapture has been intense—it goes about for a day or two, or even three, with the faculties absorbed or as though stupefied; it seems to be outside of itself.

22-....from this prayer comes the **pain** of having to return to everyday life ...in this prayer Christ's banner is now completely raised...in rapture the souls sees very clearly how little everything here below should be esteemed and the trifle that it is....The soul no longer wants to desire, nor would it want to have **free will** ...it gives Him the **keys of its will**...From here on the soul desires nothing for itself; it wants its **actions** to be in complete conformity with **His glory and His will**.

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23-...if the raptures are **authentic**...the soul receives the **effects and benefits** that were mentioned...if they are **not** present, I would doubt that the raptures come from **God**...after an hour or less the soul is left with such **freedom** and **dominion** over all things that it doesn't know itself. ....it doesn't know how so much **good** was given it...but it understands the tremendous **benefit** these raptures bear with it. There is no one who believes this if he hasn't experienced it. ...they have seen the soul's **wretchedness**—and now so quickly see it strives after things demanding such **courage**. For soon the soul becomes **obsessed** with **serving the Lord**...they think this is a temptation and foolishness. ...but these desires spring from the Lord to whom it has given the **keys of its will**.....

24-...a soul that reaches this state no longer speaks or does anything for itself. ...the **sovereign King takes care of all** it has to do...the flight is given to the spirit so that it may be **elevated** above every creature—and above itself first of all... the flight is an easy one, a delightful one, a **flight without noise**.

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25- How great is the dominion of the soul ...it beholds everything without being **ensnared**! How ashamed it feels of the time when it was ensnared!...What pity it feels for those who are still in this **blindness**...it would want to cry out to make known how deceived they are—sometimes it does so, and a thousand **persecutions** rain down upon its head. They consider this person lacking in humility...they condemn this soul...who at times can't help but disillusion those whom ...it desires to see freed from the **prison of this life**, since the life it formerly lived was nothing else than **a prisoner's life**.

26- The soul deplores ...when it was concerned about **reputation** .... This belief about **honor** is the greatest lie ...It understands that **authentic honor** stands...with **truth**...since everything that comes to an end is nothing...and is not pleasing to God...

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28-The soul sees such great blindness in **pleasures** ... In this prayer it sees not only serious faults and cobwebs in its soul but any speck of dust because the sun is very bright... The soul is like a glass of water: the water looks very clear if the sun doesn't shine on it; but when the sun shines on it, it seems to be full of dust particles ... Before being in this ecstasy the soul thinks it is careful about not offending God... But once brought into prayer...it sees so many dust particles that it would want to close its eyes again. It is not yet so much a child of this powerful eagle that it can gaze steadily at this sun. But for the little time it holds its eyes open, it sees it is filled with mud. It recalls the psalm that says: *Who will be just in Your Presence?*

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29-When the soul beholds this divine Sun, the brightness dazzles it; when it looks at itself, the mud covers its eyes; blind is this little dove. ..In this stage **true humility** is gained so that the soul doesn't care at all about saying good things of itself nor that others say them. The Lord, not the soul, distributes the **fruit of the garden**, and so nothing sticks to its hands. All the good it possesses is directed to God; if it says something about itself, it does so for Gods' glory...it owns nothing in the garden ...it sees with its own eyes that the Lord makes it close its eyes to all the **things of the world** so that it may keep them open for the **understanding of truths**.



## Chapter 21

Continues and concludes the discussion of this last degree of prayer. Tells about what the soul that experiences this prayer feels upon returning to life in the world and about the light the Lord gives it concerning the world's illusions. It contains good doctrine.

1-...there is no need for the **consent** of the soul. It has already given itself to God...and cannot deceive Him...but all of earthly life is filled with **deception and duplicity**; when you think you have won a friend, according to what is shown you, you afterward come to understand that it was a lie...It isn't possible to live in the midst of such **intrigue**... Blessed is the soul that the Lord brings to the understanding of truth! ...How much more worthwhile it would be for them to strive for this stage of prayer rather than for great dominion! ... In this stage one does not fear to lose one's life or honor for the love of God!... when the soul tastes only one drop of the water of God's kingdom, it makes everything here below seem repulsive. How much more if the soul is immersed in this water.

2- ...when I can do no more, I turn to You my Lord, to beg of You a remedy for all...

## Chapter 21

Continues and concludes the discussion of this last degree of prayer. Tells about what the soul that experiences this prayer feels upon returning to life in the world and about the light the Lord gives it concerning the world's illusions. It contains good doctrine.

4- ...I frequently desire to be without life...there is no one now living that sees with his own eyes the great illusion in which we walk and the blindness we suffer.

5- Once the soul has reached this stage...it possesses desires...and strength to put these desires into practice. There is nothing...it wouldn't venture to do...it sees clearly that everything other than **pleasing God** is nothing...Here is my life, here is my honor and my will. I have given all to You, I am Yours, make use of me according to Your will. I see...the little I am capable of...but...I can do all things, providing You

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6-...how painful it is for a soul who finds itself in this stage to have to return to dealing with everything, to see the farce of this so poorly harmonized life, to waste time in taking care of bodily needs, sleeping and eating! Everything **wearies** it; it doesn't know how to flee; it sees itself captured and in chains...It feels ...the captivity we endure because of our bodies...the soul begs God for **freedom**... the impulse is often so great...the soul wants to leave the body ...and go in search of this freedom...it doesn't find many to beg for this freedom with it...what is **more common** is the **desire to live** ...if our satisfaction were not derived from any earthly thing, how the pain of living without Him and the desire to enjoy the true life would temper the fear of death!

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7-...I wonder what the feelings of the saints must have been...in whom this **fire of the love of God had grown so intense**....it must have been a continual martyrdom ...those in whose company I find rest, are persons who have themselves these desires —I mean accompanied by works...this soul recognizes ...those who have confirmed their words with **works**. ...and the great amount of good that they do...

8- ...**raptures from God's spirit** ...cause effects that are...proven with deeds...the ...the raptures make **perfection grow**...the more that love and humility grow, the greater the **fragrance** these **flowers of virtue** give off, both for oneself and for others... In one of these raptures the Lord can work in the soul in such a way that only a **little labor** is still required to reach **perfection**... it is hard to believe what the Lord gives the soul in this stage...no effort of ours brings us to this perfection... the Lord draws the soul up from the earth and gives it dominion over every earthly thing...

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9-...His Majesty doesn't always give **raptures** because souls have **merited** them through good cultivation of the garden....it is very certain that anyone who **takes good care** of the garden and strives to be **detached** will not fail to be favored...but sometimes it is His will to show His greatness on very **wretched soil**...He so prepares the soul for every good that it seems it is no longer capable... of turning back to its **former life of offending God**. Its thought becomes so accustomed to understanding what the **real truth** is that everything else seems to it to be child's play...

10- It lives a **laborious life** and always with the **cross**, but it continues to grow rapidly. ...Within a short while it is **much improved** because God always goes on favoring it more. It is His soul; it is He who has taken it into his charge, and thus He **illuminates** it. ....it seems...He is ever guarding it from offending Him...and awakening it to His service...

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10- cont'd...When my soul reached this stage ... the **evil** in me disappeared...It didn't bother me to be....with people who formerly distracted me.....and what used to do me harm was helping me. All things were a means for my **knowing and loving God more**, for seeing what I owed Him and for regretting what I had been.

11-From the time the Lord began to grant me the favor of these **raptures...fortitude** has always been increasing; and ...He has held me by His hand so that I might not turn back... It is the Lord who does everything ...souls upon whom the Lord bestows these favors and who receive them with humility and fear...could be placed in the company of any kind of people... even the distracted and corrupt...and the soul will not be disturbed or enticed...the **experience** will help it to **greater progress**...

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11- cont'd...These are now strong souls the Lord chooses to benefit others ...little by little, as the soul approaches the Lord in this stage, He communicates to it **very deep secrets**.

12- Here in this **ecstasy** are received **true revelations** and great **favors and visions** ... all serve to **humiliate and strengthen the soul**, to lessen its esteem for the things of this life and to make it know more clearly the **grandeurs of the reward** the Lord has prepared for those who serve Him ... abandon completely everything for God. If His Majesty **repays** so fully in this life...those who serve Him...what will this reward be in the next life?

## Chapter 22

Treats of how safe a path it is for contemplatives not to raise the spirit to high things unless the Lord raises it and of how the humanity of Christ must be the means to the most sublime contemplation. Tells about a mistaken theory she once tried to follow.

This chapter is very beneficial.

1- In some books written on prayer it is said that even though the soul cannot reach this state of prayer by itself,...it will be able to help itself by lifting the spirit above all creatures and humbly raising it up ...They give strong advice to rid oneself of all **corporeal images** and to approach **contemplation of the Divinity**...They say...that these corporeal images, even when referring to the humanity of Christ, are an **obstacle** ... to the **most perfect contemplation**... they quote what the Lord said to the Apostles about the coming of the Holy Spirit...they think that since this work is spiritual...that one should try to **think of God in a general way**, He is everywhere, and we are immersed in Him ...but to **withdraw completely from Christ** ...I cannot endure...



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2-...those who hold this theory are learned and spiritual men...God leads souls by many paths...I want to speak of the way He led my soul ... some reach the experience of **union without passing beyond**—to raptures and visions—if I had kept to that practice, I believe I would never have arrived at where I am now because my practice was a mistaken one...

3- I had **no master** and I was **reading books**...but there was nothing I understood until **His Majesty gave me understanding through experience**...It seemed to me that I felt the presence of God and I strove to **recollect myself in His presence**. This is a pleasing prayer if God helps in it...since I felt the consolation, there was no one who could have made me return to the **humanity of Christ**...I thought the humanity an **impediment**...At no time now do I recall this opinion I had without feeling **pain**...

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4- ...Devoted to Christ my whole life, I held this opinion ...just before the Lord granted me **raptures** and **visions** but I didn't remain long in so **extreme a practice**...I always returned to my custom of **rejoicing in the Lord** especially after Communion. I always wanted to keep before my eyes an image of Him as I was unable to keep Him **engraved in my soul** as I desired. Is it possible, my Lord, that it entered my mind ...that You would be an impediment to my greater good ... To remedy the situation you sent me someone who would draw me away from this... and you let me see you so many times...so that I would understand how great an error it is...

5- In my opinion, this practice is why many souls, do not **advance beyond union** or attain a very great **freedom of spirit**...all the consolations were coming in small portions, and, once passed, it didn't have the companionship of Christ to help in trials and temptations. The first reason is a lack of **humility**...so concealed it goes unnoticed...

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6- ...We have Him so near in the **Blessed Sacrament**....Certainly there is no one who can endure thinking all the time about the many trials He suffered... Behold Him here without suffering...in the most Blessed Sacrament; it doesn't seem that it was in His power to leave us for even a moment...There is no trial that it wasn't good for me to suffer once I looked at you as You were... Whoever lives in the presence of so good a friend and excellent a leader, who went ahead of us to be the first to suffer, can endure all things....He is a true friend...God desires that if we are going to **please Him and receive His great favors**, we must do so through the most **sacred humanity of Christ** in whom He takes His delight. .. Many times I have perceived this truth through **experience** ...we must enter by this gate if we desire His Majesty to show us **great secrets**.

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7- ...you should desire **no other path** even if you are at the summit of contemplation; on this road you walk **safely**. This Lord of ours is the one through whom all blessings come to us. ...In beholding His life we find that He is the **best example**. What more do we desire than to have such a good friend at our side, who will not abandon us....as friends in the world do? ... The great **contemplatives** took this path: St. Francis demonstrates this through the stigmata; St. Anthony of Padua, with the Infant; St. Bernard found his delight in the Humanity and many others...

8- This practice of turning from corporeal things must be good... but ...the soul should be very advanced because until then it is clear that the Creator must be sought through creatures... The most sacred humanity of Christ must not be counted in a balance with other corporeal things...

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10- ...we are not **angels** but have a body. To desire to be angels...is **foolishness**...When one is in business matters or in times of persecution, trials and dryness, Christ is a **very good friend** because we behold Him as a man...with weaknesses and trials—and He is **company** for us. Once we have the **habit** it is easy to find Him present at our side ...but it is important not to allow ourselves to be seekers of spiritual consolations. Thus **embracing the cross**... The Lord was deprived of every consolation; they left Him alone in His trials. Let us not abandon Him, for He will give us better support than our own efforts that we might ascend higher...

11- God is very pleased to see a soul that humbly takes His Son as **mediator** and that loves this Son so much that even when His Majesty desires to raise it to lofty contemplation...it is aware of its unworthiness ...

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11- cont'd...what I have come to understand is that this whole **groundwork of prayer** is based on **humility**... to help me know myself, His Majesty strove to give me an understanding of things... and I hold that when a soul ...helps itself in this **prayer of union**....it will very soon fall again since it doesn't have a good foundation. I fear it will never attain true **poverty of spirit**...or being at rest in labors and dryness and not seeking consolation or comfort in prayer...There are some persons who think that if they aren't always working with the intellect and striving for devotion all is lost—as though so great a blessing could be merited by their labor... We are useless servants...

12- The Lord desires us to recognize our **uselessness**...and walk along this path in **freedom**, placing ourselves in the **hands of God**. If His Majesty should desire to raise us to the position of one who is an intimate and shares His secrets, we ought to accept gladly ...

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12- cont'd...if not, we ought to serve in the humbler task and not sit down in the best place...much less is allowed than in the first degree of prayer...The blessings are supernatural....the soul should strive to remain at the **feet of Christ**, it should endeavor not to leave that place...for if it is strong , God will lead it into the **desert**.

13- ...what a strange belief it is that a toad can expect to fly of itself whenever it wants. And it seems even more difficult for our spirit to raise itself up if God doesn't raise it...

14- ...let us strive to keep this **divine love** always before our eyes and to waken ourselves to love. If at some time the Lord should favor us by impressing this love on our hearts, all will become easy for us...

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15- ...when the Lord begins to grant favors to a soul such as placing it in perfect contemplation... why does it seem that the more favors it receives the more **detached** it becomes...It seems to me the reason is that the soul doesn't dispose itself completely until the Lord...gives it the determination and strength ... to trample everything underfoot...

16- ...In the end, everything depends on what His Majesty desires and to whom He desires to give this food...it is very important to have the **determination** to become completely **detached**...



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17- It seems to me that His Majesty is testing to see who it is who loves Him...He loves whoever loves Him...who has the words to explain what You give to those who trust in You...

18- ...There are some whom God right from the start leads by a very sublime path, and it seems to them that others will be able to profit by this path, quiet the intellect, and not make use of corporeal means, but in so doing those others will be left as dry as sticks... **experience and discretion** are necessary in all matter, May the Lord in His goodness give them to us.

Amen