

The Book of Her Life

Locutions

Chps. 25-26

by **St. Teresa of Avila**

Chapter 25

Discusses the nature of these locutions the Lord grants to the soul without the use of the sense of hearing, some of the delusions that can result from these locutions, and how one can discern when they come from God. This chapter is most helpful and gives a lot of doctrine for anyone who finds himself in this degree of prayer since the matter is explained very well.

1- It seems to me it would be good to explain how this **locution** the Lord grants takes place and what the soul feels...The **words** are very **explicit** but are not heard with bodily ears, although they are **understood** much more **clearly** than they would be if heard—and to try to **resist understanding** them is of **no avail**... when **God addresses the soul**...His words make me listen and make the **intellect** so keenly capable of understanding what God desires us to understand...He shows Himself to be our true Lord. I have a lot of **experience** of this because with the great fear I bore I resisted for almost two years...

2- I should like to explain the **delusions** that can take place...For anyone who has a lot of **experience** there will be few or none at all; but there must be much experience...

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2- cont'd... And also I want to explain the **difference** between what comes from the **good spirit** and what comes from the **bad spirit** and the **intellect speaking to itself**... As for when it is from God, I have had much experience in many things that were said to me and were **fulfilled** after two or three years.

3-...anyone who has understood words coming **from God** will see clearly the nature of these words coming **from the intellect** because the **difference** between the two is **great**...in the one case the words are **composed** and in the other they are **listened to**... the words the **intellect** fabricates are as though **muffled, fancied** and without **clarity**... It is in our power to **divert our attention** from these words of the intellect, as we do when speaking we decide to keep quiet; in the case of those words from God there is no way of diverting one's attention.

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3- cont'd...**Another sign** more **noticeable** than all the others is that these words composed by the intellect do not produce any **effect**. Those the Lord speaks are both **words** and **works**...these words **touch the soul, give it light, favor it and bring it quiet**. And if the soul suffers **dryness, agitation and worry**, these are **taken away** as though by a stroke of the hand since it seems the Lord wants it to understand that He is **all powerful** and that **His words are works**.

4- It seems to me the **difference** between the two kinds of locution is the same as that between **speaking and listening**... in words from God the **voice** is so **clear** that you don't lose a syllable of what is said. And these latter happen when the soul and intellect are agitated and distracted...and in hearing the **first word**...the soul is **changed completely**. How will things be understood especially when it is **enraptured**, for the **faculties** are **suspended** ... and the **imagination** remains as though **stultified**?

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5-...in my opinion, **visions** are never seen nor **words** understood while the soul is **united** in the **rapture** itself... all the **faculties are completely lost**... one can neither see nor understand nor hear. The soul is completely **under the power of another**, and during this short time...the Lord leaves it no freedom at all. Once **this short space of time has passed**, while the **soul still remains in a kind of rapture**, these **locutions take place**. The faculties are ...not lost, but they do hardly anything...There are so many ways of **understanding the difference between the two kinds of locutions** ...that a person will not be misled often.

6-... the locutions that come from God the soul receives the **effect** whether it wills so or not... In the words coming from God the experience is as though we were **listening** to a **very holy person** or to one who is most learned with great authority, who we know will not lie to us... these words make one tremble—if they are words of **reproof**;

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6- cont'd... and if they are **words of love**, they make one dissolve in love. They concern matters which are very far from one's mind...

7- It has often happened to me that if I have some **doubt**...I think I **imagined** the words (afterwards because it is impossible to do so at the time) and after a long while I see them fulfilled. For the Lord causes them to remain in the **memory** so they cannot be forgotten. But the **locutions** that come from the **intellect** are like the first stirring of thought which pass and are forgotten...

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8-...In the **locutions** from God, we are **taught** without losing any time; things are understood that it seems would require a month to compose, and the intellect itself and the soul are amazed at some of the things that are understood.

9-...we can understand words coming from the **intellect** whenever we want...But in **words from God**, this is not so; I will spend many days in which it is impossible to **understand** something...and at other times... I am made to understand...

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10- When the words are from the devil...they leave **bad effects** ... a great **dryness remains...** there is also a disquiet in the soul... one is unable to understand where the disquiet comes from...the soul is **agitated and afflicted** without knowing why because what he says is not **evil but good...** The **consolation and delight** he gives are markedly **different**. He could **deceive** someone who does not have or who has not had other consolations from God.

11- I am speaking of **true spiritual consolations**: a gentle refreshment-strong, deeply impressed, delightful and quiet...It is well to be ever on one's **guard**. Persons who have not advanced beyond devotional feelings can be easily **deceived** if they have visions or revelations... **No mildness** remains in the soul when visions or revelations come from the devil; it is left as though **frightened and very grieved**.

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12-...the devil will not deceive...a soul that does not trust itself in anything and that is fortified in the faith... always strives to proceed in conformity with what the Church holds...If at times it should see itself wavering in its thought against this firmness in the faith ...and if the **devotion** or **vision** doesn't provide help toward this **fortitude**—it shouldn't consider its **locution** safe...

13-... from what I see and know through experience, a **locution** bears the **credentials** of being from **God** if it is in conformity with **Sacred Scripture**. And if it should **deviate** from Scripture just a little, I would have greater assurance that it comes from the devil...and when the locution is from him, it seems that all **blessings go into hiding** and **flee from the soul**, in that it is left **displeased** and **agitated** and without any good effect.

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14- Still the devil can play many tricks...so have **fear** and always **seek counsel**, have a **master** who is a learned man and hide nothing from him. In this way **no harm** can come... once many in whom I had great trust...gathered to discuss a **remedy** for me...They were fond of me and feared lest I be deceived... They came to the decision that my experience was from the devil ... Since I saw that so many agreed...I felt the greatest scrupulosity, thinking my inability to believe them came from a lack of humility ... as they were all learned men. Why shouldn't I believe them? I forced myself ... I thought of my wretched life ... and thought they must be speaking truth.

15-... I had for many days given up receiving Communion and given up solitude, my whole consolation, since I had no one with whom to speak. They were all against me... My confessor alone (even though he agreed with them in order to test me as I learned later) always consoled me and told me...

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15- cont'd...the devil couldn't do me any harm if I didn't offend God, that the locutions would leave in due time, and that I should beg this of God. And he ... and many others... begged His Majesty to lead me by another path...

16... I did not set aside hours of solitude for prayer, the Lord made me become **recollected** during conversation and without my being able to avoid it, told me what He pleased; even though I may not have wanted to, I had to listen.

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17- I was **alone** without any person in whom I could find support, unable to pray vocally or read, but terrified by so much...fear as to whether the devil would deceive me, **completely agitated and wearied** without knowing what to do with myself...I remained in this condition **four or five hours**, because there was **no consolation** for me either from heaven or from earth; the Lord left me to suffer and to fear a thousand dangers... Would that no one ever pause to love anyone but You! It seems Lord, You try with rigor the person who loves You so that in **extreme trial** he might understand the greatest extreme of Your love... You rescue the one who trusts in You alone.

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18- While in this great **affliction**...these words alone were enough to take it away and bring me complete **quiet**: '**Do not fear, daughter; for I am, and I will not abandon you; do not fear.**' ...by these words alone I was given **calm** together with **fortitude, courage, security, quietude, and light** so that in one moment I saw my soul become another... Oh, what a good God! Oh, how good a Lord and how powerful! He provides not only the counsel but also the **remedy**! **His words are works**! ...

19-... I often recalled the time the Lord **commanded the winds to be quiet when the storm arose at sea**, and so I said: **who is this that all my faculties obey Him, who softens a heart that seemed like stone, and who gives the water of gentle tears where it seemed there would be dryness for a long time?**

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19- cont'd... I desire to serve this Lord; I aim for nothing else but to **please Him**. I want no happiness, no rest, no other good but to do His will... If this Lord is powerful, as I see that He is...and if the devils are His slaves ... what evil can they do to me since I am a servant of this Lord and King? Why shouldn't I have the fortitude to engage in combat with all of hell?

I took the cross in my hand, and it seemed ...God gave me courage because in an short while I saw that I was another person and that I wouldn't fear bodily combat with them; for I thought that with that cross I would easily conquer all of them. So I said: 'Come now all of you, for, being a servant of the Lord, I wasn't to see what you can do to me.'

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20- There was no doubt...that they were **afraid of me**, for I remained **so calm and so unafraid of them all**... I was left with a **mastery** over them truly given by the Lord of all; I pay no more attention to them than to **flies**... when they observe they are esteemed but little, their strength leaves them...May it please His Majesty that we fear Him whom we ought to fear and understand that **more harm can come to us from one venial sin than from all hell together**...

21- How frightened these devils make us because we want to be frightened through other **attachments** to honors, property, and delights! It is then that they do us great **harm**... If we abhor all for God and we **embrace the cross** and try truly to **serve God**, the devil will **flee these truths** like the plague...

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21- cont'd...If the devil sees that a person is already blind by the fact that he places his trust in vain things ... he concludes this person is a child and treats him as such. And dares to fight with him not once but many times.

22- ... I don't understand these fears, "The devil! The devil!", when we can say "God! God!", and make the devil tremble. Yes, for we already know that he cannot stir if the Lord doesn't permit him to...I fear those who have such great fear of the devil more than I do the devil himself, for he can't do anything to me. Whereas these others, especially if they are confessors, cause severe disturbance...Blessed be the Lord who has so truly helped me!

Chapter 26

Continues on the same subject. Tells and explains about things that happened to her, which both caused her to lose the fear and confirmed that it was the good spirit speaking to her

1- I consider this **courage** the Lord gave me against the devils one of the great **favors** He granted me. For that a soul should be intimidated by or fearful of anything other than **offending God** is a serious disadvantage...there is nothing to fear, if one walks in **truth** in the presence of His Majesty and with a **pure conscience**... I would desire all fears so as not to **offend** Him...

...in those who reach this state where the soul feels within itself that it **truly loves Him**... love is not **disguised** as in the beginning stages, but operates with such powerful **impulses** and **desires to see God** ... that everything tires, everything wearies, everything torments. If it is **not with God or for God**, there is **no rest** that doesn't weary it; so this love is something very clear...and doesn't pass by in disguise.

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2- ...I was suffering from great **tribulations and criticism**...when the Lord said to me: “**Why are you afraid? Do you not know that I am all-powerful? I will fulfill what I have promised.**” ...I was immediately left with such **fortitude** that ... I would again undertake ...greater trials, and I would once more take **suffering** upon myself in order to **serve** Him...Often His words to me were rebukes...enough to **dissolve a soul**; ... His Majesty... gives both the **counsel and the cure**. At other times the **locutions** bring my past **sins** to mind—especially when our Lord wants to grant me a special favor; it seems the soul is already before the true Judge since they represent the **truth** to it with such **clear understanding** that it doesn't know where to hide... there are so many reasons for knowing the words come from God that ...one cannot be ignorant of this.

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3-The **safest thing**, as the Lord told me, is to make known to my confessor the whole state of my soul and the favors God grants me, that he be learned, and that I obey him...without doing so I would have no peace...there can be no harm but much to gain. I had a **confessor**...who disturbed me exceedingly, and he was the one who profited me the most... I had a great love for him but I had some **temptations** to leave him because it seemed to me the affliction he caused me hindered my prayer. Every time I was **determined to change**, I heard that I should not do so and a **rebuke** that grieved me more than the confessor did. Sometimes I grew weary...but all was necessary because **my will did not easily bend**. The Lord told me once that it wasn't **obedience** if I wasn't resolved to **suffer**, that I should fix my eyes on what He suffered, and that all would be easy.

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4-... a confessor who heard my confession at the beginning advised me that once the **locutions** were proven to be from the **good spirit** I should be silent and not speak about them to anyone ...This didn't seem wrong to me because each time I told the confessor about the locutions my feeling of **shame** was so strong that sometimes I felt it more than when I had serious sins to confess ... when the **favours were great**, the confessors would not believe me and would **make fun of me**...I felt this so strongly that I thought telling them about these favours would be **disrespectful to the wonders of God**, and that for this reason I should remain silent ... I then understood that the **advice** of that confessor was very **wrong**, that I should in no way remain silent with my confessor, for there would be **great security** telling him and that by not doing this I could sometimes be **deceived**.

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5- As often as the Lord commanded something of me in prayer and my confessor told me to do otherwise, the Lord returned and told me to **obey my confessor**; afterward His Majesty would **change the confessor's mind**...When they **forbade the reading of many books in the vernacular**, I felt that prohibition very much...The Lord said to me: **"Don't be sad, for I shall give you a living book."** I was unable to understand why this was said to me, since I had not yet experienced any **visions**... within only a few days, I received **so much to think about** and **such recollection** in the presence of what I saw, and the Lord showed **so much love for me by teaching me in many ways**, that I had **very little or almost no need for books**. His Majesty had become the **true book** in which I saw the truths. Blessed be such a book that leaves what must be read and done so **impressed** that you **cannot forget!** ...

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5- cont'd...Who is it that sees the Lord covered with wounds and afflicted with persecutions who will not embrace them, love them, and desire them? Who beholds something of the glory that He gives to those who serve Him who doesn't know that all one can do and suffer is nothing since we hope for such a reward? Who sees the torments suffered by the damned who doesn't find the torments of earth to be delights in comparison with them and doesn't know how much he owes the Lord for having freed him so often from that place?

6- Because with God's help more will be said about some of these things, I want to get on with the account of my life...whoever has experience will understand...whoever has not had experience...well, it must all seem to be nonsense...May the Lord help me to succeed in doing His will. Amen