

The Book of Her Life

Favors 2: Intercession

Chp. 39

by St. Teresa of Avila

Chapter 39

Continues on the same subject, telling of the great favors the Lord granted her. Treats of how He promised to answer her prayers for other persons. of some remarkable instances in which His Majesty granted her this favor.

1-Once while I was imploring the Lord to give sight to a person ... I feared He would not hear me because of my sins. **He appeared to me**...and began to show me the wound in His left hand, and with the other hand He drew out a **large nail** embedded there...His flesh was torn out along with it. The sharp pain was clearly evident...He told me He who had suffered that for me **should not be doubted** ... He promised me there wasn't anything I might ask Him that He wouldn't do... He knew I wouldn't ask for anything not in conformity with His glory... and in a **better way** than I knew how to ask; and how much more He would **grant my petitions** now that He knew that I loved Him... I don't think eight days passed before the Lord gave sight back to this person.

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2-At another time there was a person very sick with a most painful illness... I began to **beg our Lord for his health**... the next day this person was completely cured of that affliction.

3-Once I felt troubled because I knew a person ... desired to do something serious against the honor of God, as well as his own... **I begged the Lord** with all my heart to provide a **cure for him**... I went to a secluded hermitage with a painting of Christ at the pillar and begged Him to grant me this favor, I heard a **gentle voice speaking** to me in a kind of whistling sound ... I felt such **quiet and joy and interior delight** ... In this experience I realized that what I had asked for would be **accomplished**...

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4- I knew a person who had **resolved to serve God**...because of some occasions of sin...he gave up prayer and did not withdraw from these occasions... it was more than a month that I didn't do anything else but **beg God** to bring this soul back to Himself. One day while in prayer I saw a devil at my side tearing up some papers in his hands... it seemed to me that what I had been asking for had been **accomplished**. And so it was, I learned that this person had made his **confession** with great contrition and **returned to God**...

5-It often happens that our Lord draws souls away from serious sin and leads others to greater perfection **because of my beseeching Him**. The Lord has granted me so many favors by **freeing souls from purgatory** ...

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5-cont'd....He has granted much more in regard to the **health of souls** than He has in regard to the **health of bodies**... At the beginning it made me very scrupulous because I couldn't help believing the Lord granted these **favors because of my prayer**... But now there are so many cases ... obvious to other persons... that it doesn't bother me to believe this...I'm **unable to ask for what the Lord finds unsuitable** ... in other cases that His Majesty is going to do, I find I can pray for them often and with insistence...

6-The **difference** between these **two kinds of petition** is so great ... In the one case I force myself to beg the Lord though I may not feel the fervor in myself ... that I feel for the other petitions...

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6-cont'd... In the other case I feel like one who speaks clearly... to someone who is listening very eagerly. In the **first case**, the petition is made... as in vocal prayer... in the **other**, it is made in **sublime contemplation**; the Lord...makes it known He hears us and is glad we ask this of Him and glad to grant us this favor ...

7-While I was in the house of that lady I mentioned, where it was necessary to be careful and ever reflect upon the **vanity all the things of life bear with them**...He who has true vision watched so as not to let me out of His hand...

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8- Now that I mention '**true vision**' I recall the great trials persons whom God has brought to **knowledge of the truth** suffer in dealing with these earthly things, where so much is **covered up**....many of the things I write about here do not come from my own head , but my Heavenly Master tells them to me. The things I designate with the words '**this I understood**' or '**the Lord said this to me**' ... I can't leave out even a syllable...and I put it down as **coming from myself**...some things are from me...or not being made known to me through a **revelation**.

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- 9- But alas, my God...even in **spiritual matters** we often want to understand things through our own very twisted opinion of the truth, as we do in worldly things. We think we must measure our progress by the years in which we have practiced prayer... **He can give more to one in half a year than to another in many years!**
- 10- ... Anyone who has talent in discerning spirits ... and **true humility** ... judges by the **good effects, resolutions and love**; the Lord gives him **light**.... As a result this person looks at **improvement and progress of souls** and not at their age. One person in **half a year** can gain more than another can in **twenty years**.... The Lord gives to whomever He wants and also to whoever is **better disposed**. I see young girls entering this house ...

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10-cont'd...they close themselves up forever in a house without income, like someone who doesn't esteem his life. They **give up everything**, neither do they want their own will, nor does it even occur to them that they could be unhappy with such enclosure and austerity: **together they all offer themselves as a sacrifice to God.**

11- ... What His Majesty didn't succeed in doing with me in such a great number of years, from the time I began to practice prayer and He began to grant me favors, He has succeeded in doing with them in **three months**- with some even **three days**... He pays them well. Surely **they are not unhappy about what they have done for Him.**

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12-... many years have passed since we ... began to practice prayer... **let us fix our eyes on His Majesty**; if we see they are humble... the Lord who grants them so many favors will not let them fall from the precipice... **we want to measure them by our own measure**...if we don't attain the wonderful good effects and resolutions of their experience, **let us humble ourselves** and not condemn them; without experience one can misunderstand these things. In thinking we are looking after their progress, we are **avoiding** and **losing this occasion** for **progress** ourselves. The Lord places this occasion before us to **humble** us and that we understand what we **lack** and how much **closer to God** and more **detached** these souls must be than are ours since His Majesty **draws them so close to Him**.

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13-... I would prefer a **prayer** practiced for only a **short time** and that produced **marvelous effects** that can be seen at once.... Such prayer is **better** though than prayer practiced for many years in which one never... succeeds **in resolving to do anything at all for God** except some tiny little things... not considered ... a great effect of prayer.

... I forget the favors at every step... though His Majesty ... will highly regard these little deeds we perform. But I wouldn't want to pay attention to them...since they are nothing... but If I served you Lord in great matters, I wouldn't have to pay attention to trifles...so don't blame me Lord for having to console myself with something, for I don't serve You in anything...

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14- ... When a **brief from Rome** was successfully obtained so that this monastery could exist without an **income**...I thought the accomplishment had cost me some difficulty...and while thinking of the **trials** I had experienced ... in each thing I did... I found many **faults** and **imperfections** ... lack of **courage**, and often little **faith**... When I see the **fulfillment** of everything the Lord told me in regard to this house... I never succeeded in **believing** what the Lord told me would come about; but neither could I **doubt** that it would ... so I stopped thinking about the matter... to not stumble upon so many of my **faults**. May He be blessed who when He so desires draws good out of everything, amen.

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- 15- ... it is dangerous to **count the number of years** you have **practiced prayer**; even though **humility** may be present, there can remain a feeling of **deserving** something for the service ... it is certain that any spiritual person who thinks he deserves these delights of spirit for the many years he has practiced prayer will **not ascend** to the **summit of spiritual life...**
- 16- ... those years of service should be forgotten; for in comparison with one drop of the blood the Lord shed for us, everything we do is disgusting... Let us out of the love for God set aside these judgments because they belong to Him. These comparisons are always bad, even in earthly matters...

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17- ... In this **vision** I saw myself **standing alone in prayer** in a large field; **surrounding me** were many different types of **people**. All of them had **weapons** in their hands so as to harm me... I couldn't escape on any side without putting myself in danger of death; I was alone without a person to take my part... not knowing what to do, I **lifted my eyes to heaven** and saw **Christ**, not in heaven but above me in the sky; He was holding out His hand to me ... He protected me... I had no fear of all the people, nor could they harm me...

18- ... I was given an **understanding of the dream's meaning**... I knew the vision was a **picture of the world**; everything in the world bears arms so as to injure the afflicted soul... when you least expect it, you are **ensnared**... all things strive to ensnare. But I am referring to friends, relatives...very good persons ... I found myself so oppressed by them all...

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19- ... It was the greatest **persecution**... I sometimes found myself **constricted on every side** that the only **remedy** was to raise my eyes to heaven and call upon God... I didn't **trust** much in anyone, for there is no **stable help** but in God. The Lord always sent me in these great trials a **person** on His side to lend me a hand and who was unattached to anything other than pleasing the Lord...

20-... **unable** to **recollect myself** and in battle with my own thoughts ... I saw I didn't have the **detachment** I usually do ... I feared...that the favors the Lord had granted me had been an **illusion**. I experienced a great **darkness of the soul**... The **Lord** began to speak to me. He told me not to be **anxious**... and that there is no **security** while we live in this **flesh** ... and that He would never abandon me... He told me this with comforting compassion...

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- 21- His Majesty ... often speaks these words to me: “**Now you are Mine, and I am yours.**” The words I say are: “**What do I care about myself, Lord, when I care only about You?**” These words make me extraordinarily **embarrassed**... I think that more **courage** is necessary to receive these favors than to undergo the severest trials...
- 22 – On occasion ardent desires to receive **Communion** come over me...One morning it was raining so hard it seemed impossible to leave the house... When I reached the church a **great rapture** came upon me. It seemed to me I saw the **heavens open**... A **throne** was shown to me ... and above it **another throne** where the Divinity was. Although I didn't see the Divinity ...

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22-cont'd... I knew it was there... animals were holding up the throne...what the throne was like or who was on it I didn't see only a **multitude of angels**... It seemed they were afire... I understood that everything desirable is brought together there, yet I didn't see anything... I understood that I couldn't understand anything and reflecting on that glory ...everything else is nothing at all... all things seemed to me like an ant-hill.

23-I was present at Mass and received **Communion**, but I don't know how it was possible... I had been in that **rapture for two hours**. It seems this **fire comes from above**...and I play no part in obtaining even a spark of it...I was amazed how this fire ... seems to **consume the old man** with his faults and misery. Like the phoenix...

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23-cont'd...which after it is burned rises again from the same ashes, so afterward the **soul** becomes another, with **different desires and great fortitude**... it begins to **walk on the Lord's path with a new purity**. While I was beseeching His Majesty...that I would begin to serve Him, He told me: "...see that you don't forget to **strive always for improvement.**"

24- Once having the same **doubts** I just mentioned about whether these visions were from God, the Lord appeared to me and said to me severely: "**O children of men! How long will you be hard of heart?**" He said I should examine whether I was totally **surrendered to Him or not**;

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24-cont'd...that if I was, I should believe He would not let me go astray... He returned to say ... that He already knew ... I wouldn't fail to dedicate myself entirely to His service; that everything I wanted would be done... and that I should **behold the love for Him** that was growing in me everyday...and that the devil wouldn't give the quietude or clarity of understanding I experienced. He made me realize that since so many people ... told me these visions were from God I would be wrong not to believe them.

25- Once while reciting a psalm, I was given so **clear an understanding of how there is only one God and three Persons** ... when I think about or discuss the Blessed Trinity, it seems I understand how it is possible; and this give me great happiness.

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26- One day, the feast of the Assumption of our Lady, Queen of Angels, the Lord... in a **rapture**...showed me her **ascent to heaven, the happiness and solemnity with which she was received and the place where she is...** The **effects** of this favor were great. I was helped in having a desire to undergo difficult trials, and I was left with a longing to serve our Lady since she deserved this so much.

27- While at the college of the Society of Jesus and while the **brothers were receiving Communion**, I saw a very richly made **pallium** above their heads ... amen

Pallium: a woolen vestment conferred by Pope on an archbishop