

The Book of Her Life
The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila
Volume One
Chapters 37-38: Favors 1-Effects
Translated by KKavanaugh, ocd &
ORodriguez

Chapter 37: Discusses the effects of a certain favor the Lord granted her. Some very good doctrine accompanies this discussion. Tells how one should strive for a greater degree of glory, and esteem it highly, and that we shouldn't neglect everlasting goods for any difficulty.

1-It is hard for me to say more...about the favors the Lord granted me...But to obey the Lord... and your Reverences, I will say something to give Him glory. May it please His Majesty that **some soul may benefit**. May all be encouraged to please His Majesty since even in this life He bestows **tokens of His love**.

2-First, it must be understood that in these favors the Lord grants the soul, there can be **more or less glory**...The **difference** in a **delight and favor** God gives in a **vision or rapture** can be so great that it seems impossible there could be anything more to desire here below, and so the **soul doesn't ask for any more happiness**. Since the Lord showed me how great **the difference is in heaven** between the joy of some and of others ...and on earth as well the Lord has **no measure in giving**...I wouldn't want to lose...as much as **one tiny particle of greater glory**. So if I could choose to **bear all the trials of the world** ...to afterward **ascend to greater glory** or **no trials to then descend to a little bit less**, I would eagerly choose **all the trials to rejoice more in God's grandeurs**; I see that whoever understands Him more loves and praises Him more.

3-...even if I were in the **lowest place in heaven**...I would consider myself fortunate to be there...

4-...**With every favor** granted me, whether vision or revelation, my **soul gained** something...The **vision of Christ** left upon me the **impression of His beauty**...and one time is sufficient to make this imprint...

A benefit I received that was most advantageous was around a **serious fault** I had that did me much harm; when I began to know **someone liked me**, and I found them attractive, **I became attached** ...This was something so **harmful as it was leading my soul astray**. After I beheld the **beauty of the Lord**, no one **in comparison with Him** seemed to attract me or occupy my thoughts. By turning my **gaze just a little inward** to behold the **image I have in my soul**, I obtained such freedom...There is no knowledge or gift that could amount to anything once **one word spoken from that divine mouth is heard**...

5-I experienced this **freedom** with one of **my confessors**...who I believe **stand in God's place**...and so I showed them I liked them. They were afraid...lest I become attached...and they showed me their displeasure...I laugh to myself to see how mistaken they were...

A **greater love and confidence in the Lord began** when I saw Him as one with whom I could **converse continually**... and that He wasn't surprised by **man's weakness** ... and many falls resulting **from the first sin He came to repair**...I can speak to Him as a **friend** even though He is Lord, unlike the lords here on earth...whose lordship consists in artificial displays and who have not trampled the world underfoot ... Those who have, **speak the truth**, since they have no fear, and are obligated to no one ...

6- O King of Glory...! How true that **Your kingdom is not armed with trifles, since it has no end!** ... There is no need for intermediaries with You! Upon beholding Your person one sees that You alone ... merit to be called Lord ... On earth, if a king were alone, he would fail to be recognized ...thus the reason for the **artificial displays**...

...It is impossible not to see that You are a great Emperor ... who shows **humility and love** to someone like me... We can **converse and speak with You** as we like... although the **fear of offending you becomes greater**... not a fear of punishment ... for this **punishment is nothing when compared to losing You**.

7-These are the **benefits from this vision**, besides other great ones **left in the soul**. If the **vision is from God** it is known through **its effects**—when the soul is in the light. But the Lord often wants it to be in darkness and not see this light... It happened that for eight days my soul was in a stupor... It pleased me to see the weakness of the soul when God is not working in it...in this state **the soul is not without Him**... but though the soul puts wood on the fire ... the **fire of love doesn't not burn**. It is through His mercy that it sees at least **smoke** to know the **fire is not entirely dead**. **The Lord returns to enkindle it** ... the best thing for the soul to do is to **surrender** to the fact that **of itself it can do nothing**.

8-...I dared to **complain of His Majesty**, and said to Him: "How is it, my God, that it's not enough that You keep me in this **miserable life**... where **everything hinders enjoyment of You**, in that I have to **eat and sleep and carry on business and talk with everyone**...how is it when there is so little time left to enjoy Your presence, **You hide from me**? How is this compatible with your mercy? How can the love You bear me allow this? I believe that if it were possible for me to hide from You as You hide from me, that the love you have for me would not suffer it; but You are with me and see me always. Don't tolerate this Lord! I implore You to see that it is **injurious to one who loves You so much**."

9-...with my whole mind I make these **complaints** and the Lord puts up with me. May so good a King be praised! ...we wouldn't dare say these things to earthly kings! ...

10- ... I didn't know how to live (when I entered St. Joseph's monastery) ... the soul sees it mustn't miss any of the fine points in the **world's rules of etiquette**...These **rules weary me** though and I was never done excusing myself because I couldn't help but make many mistakes... anyone who cares about heaven needs to have a **continued solicitude about pleasing God and despising the world**. It is beyond me how anyone can have so much concern about pleasing those who live in the world which is always changing...

11-... I don't know how to live anymore... I pity spiritual people who are obliged for certain holy reasons to live in the world, it is a terrible cross they must bear with all these rules of etiquette...if you could become ignorant in this science ...you would be freed from a lot of troubles.

12-...Wanting to speak of God's grandeurs, I've ended up speaking about petty worldly things. Since the Lord has granted me the favor of abandoning this world, I want to go forth from it. Let those who love such trivial things attend to them...

Chapter 38: Deals with some great favors the Lord granted her by showing her certain heavenly secrets, and with other great visions and revelations that His Majesty wanted her to see. Tells of the effects they had on her and of the great profit her soul derived from them.

1-One night, being so ill...I took my rosary...and tried not to recollect my intellect... a **rapture** came upon me so forcefully that I had no power to resist it...It seemed to me I was **brought into heaven**. The first persons I saw there were my parents...it lasted only a short time...and I was very ashamed to go to my confessor ... that he might make fun of me...but... finally... I went to him; I never dared remain silent about such things...on account of the great **fear** I had of being **deceived**. Since he saw how anxious I was...he said many kind things to me...

2-...sometimes the Lord showed me greater **secrets**...What He revealed was so great...so as to leave me marveling and proficient in considering ...all the **things of life as little**...the imagination cannot paint what this light is like...He bestows along with this knowledge a **delight so sublime** as to be indescribable...it's better to say no more.

3-Once while the Lord was showing me marvelous things...He said to me: "See, daughter what those who are against me lose; don't neglect to tell them." Ah, my Lord, **if Your Majesty doesn't give them light, what little benefit will what I say bring to those whose deeds blind them!** ...

I wanted to remain in this state and not return to everyday living, for the contempt left in me for everyday living was great...I see how basely we are occupied, those of us who are **detained by earthly things**.

4-Once when I was with that lady I mentioned...she gave orders that I be shown some of her **jewels of gold and precious stone**... She thought they would make me happy. Recalling what the Lord has kept for us, I was **laughing to myself and feeling pity at the sight of what men esteem**...

The soul has great dominion...It is the **detachment** proper and natural to us ... **God does it all**, He shows these **truths** ...and they are **imprinted on the soul**...

5-...Now **death**, which I always feared greatly, seems to me to be the easiest thing for anyone who serves God, for in a moment the soul finds it is **freed from this prison and brought to rest**...**Raptures** in which God carries away the spirit and reveals to it such **excellent things** are like the departure of the soul from the body, for in an instant these good things are seen all together. Let's omit any word about the pains suffered when **soul and body are torn from each other** for little attention should be paid to them. The death of those who truly love God and have despised the things of this world must be more **gentle**.

6-These revelations helped me...in coming to know **our true country** and that we are **pilgrims** here below; it is a wonderful thing ...to know where we shall live. ... and a great help ...to have **seen** that it is a **land** where we will be very much at **ease**., to look toward heaven **recollects the soul**... sometimes those who I know live there are my **companions** in whom I find comfort; it seems they are **truly alive** and those who **live on earth** are so **dead** ...

7-Everything I see with my bodily eyes seems to be a **dream** and a **mockery**. What I have seen with the **eyes of my soul** is what I **desire**, and since seen as far away, this life is a death... the **favor** the Lord grants to whomever He gives these visions is extraordinary. They help in **bearing a heavy cross**...and if the favor is not **sometimes forgotten**, though it comes again to mind ... **how could one live?** ... His Majesty...has

desired I understand something of these blessings so that what happened to Lucifer... may not happen to me... God's mercy makes me feel safe. He has freed me from so many sins.

8- The favors are not as great, as the ones I shall now speak of...although each favor ... in itself ... is beyond comparison.

9- One day on the vigil of Pentecost I went to ... where I often prayed and began to read about this feast ... it seemed to me He was **not failing to be with me** ... and remembered once when I read the passage I lacked everything ... and now understood the opposite about myself...I knew the Lord had granted me **a great favor**... **I didn't recognize my soul** by the change I saw... while reflecting on this **a great impulse** came upon me ... it seemed by soul wanted to leave my body because it didn't fit there ... the impulse was so extreme ... although seated, I tried to lean against the wall as my **natural power** was **completely gone**.

10-While in this state I saw a **dove** over my head...it was different from the doves on earth, larger... and it didn't have feathers ...but little **shells** on its wings that gave off **great brilliance**... It fluttered about for the space of a Hail Mary. My soul ... was losing itself and so lost sight of the dove. The **spirit** was quieted by so **good a guest**... when it began to enjoy the guest, fear left and a joyous quietude began while the **soul** continued in **rapture**.

11- The glory of this **rapture** was extraordinary. For the rest of Pentecost I remained **stupefied and stunned**... I experienced wonderful **inner joy**. From that day, I noticed the greatest **improvement** in myself from a more **sublime love of God** and **stronger virtues**. May He be blessed forever, amen.

12- Another time I **saw the dove** over the head of a Dominican father...the rays and splendor of the wings extended much further. It was made known to me he would **draw souls to God**.

13- At another time I saw **our Lady** placing a very **white mantle** on the *presentado*, from the Dominican order, of whom I have sometimes spoken. She told me that because of the **service** he rendered her in founding

this house, she gave him the mantle as a **sign** she would keep his **soul spotless** and that he would not fall into mortal sin... A few years later he died...his **death was so holy**...there is no reason for doubt... He at times would appear to me in resplendent glory and told me some things. At the time of his death his prayer had reached such a degree ... that he wanted to **avoid mental prayer** because of his **weakness** and his **many raptures**.

14-I saw some favors the Lord bestowed on the rector of the Society of Jesus... once a severe trial came upon him, he was persecuted and in deep affliction... One day while I was hearing Mass, at the elevation of the host, I saw Christ on the cross. He spoke words of consolation I was to tell the rector and I was to remind him of what Christ had suffered for him. This gave the rector great consolation...all came about as the Lord had told me.

15- I saw great things concerning members of the whole order to which this father belonged, the Society of Jesus. I saw them in heaven... and I see their lives are in conformity with what he Lord has made known to me about them.

16- One night while in prayer, the Lord **reminded me how bad my life had been**. I was filled with **shame and grief**...He told me I should **esteem highly** that a will ... as badly occupied as mine had been ...should desire to be fixed on Him, and that He would accept it.

At other times He told me I should recall the time it seems I considered it an **honor to go against His will** and that I should remember what I owed him... If I have faults His Majesty gives me an understanding of them that **reduces me to nothing**... this happens often. Once reprimanded by my confessor, I sought consolation in prayer; and found there the **true reprimand**.

17-...the Lord had begun to recall my wretched life to me...ordinarily when I receive some favor from the Lord I am first **humbled** to see more clearly how far I am from deserving favors ... after a short while my spirit was so **enraptured** it seemed to be almost entirely out of the body. I saw the most sacred humanity with more extraordinary glory than ever. It was made

manifest with a knowledge admirable and clear that the **humanity** was taken into the **bosom of the Father**... without my seeing anything, it seemed to me I was in the **presence of the Divinity** ... for several days I couldn't return to myself ... I went about in the **presence of that majesty of the Son of God**... the **vision** is strongly engraved on the imagination... and the impression is very **consoling and beneficial**.

18- I saw this vision three other times.... It is the most **sublime vision**... and bears marvelous **benefits**. It seems it **purifies** the soul ... and **removes** almost entirely the sensitive part of our nature ... a **great flame** that seems to **burn away** ... all of **life's desires** ... it was made clear to me ... how everything is **vanity**... It is a powerful lesson for raising one's **desires** to pure **truth** ... **great fear** is caused in the soul when it sees how it dared ... to **offend so extraordinary a majesty**.

19-... the **benefit** coming from this vision is great ...and if you did not **hide** Your grandeur Lord, who would approach ... a **union** ... with such great majesty! May the angels and all creatures praise You who **measures** things in accordance with our **weakness**... and so Your great power doesn't frighten us...

20- What once happened to a peasant could happen to us ... He found a **treasure** worth much, and ... it caused him much **sadness**... not knowing what to do with the treasure, he gradually died. If he hadn't found it **all at once**... but **little by little** to sustain him... he would have lived more happily and it wouldn't have cost him his life.

21-... how admirably you know how to sustain souls ... You show them this great wealth little by little. When I behold majesty... **concealed** in something as small as a **host** ... I marvel at such **wisdom**... If He ...who grants me so many favors, did not give me strength, it would be impossible to **conceal** the fact ... about marvels so great ...How will a mouth who has spoken so many words against this Lord be united with that most glorious body abounding in purity and compassion? For the **love** that face shows... makes the soul much more **sorrowful** ... at not having **served Him**

than does the majesty it beholds in Him, causes it to **fear ...**

22- ... in some way in these great **afflictions** my **soul** feels I have done something in your **service**... I don't know what I am saying ...but I find I'm disturbed... since I brought these things back to mind... but there is no good thought if You do not give it... I am the **debtor**, Lord and You the **offended** one.

23- Once while approaching to receive Communion, I saw two devils... It seemed their **horns** were wrapped around the **priest's throat**, and in the host...I saw my **Lord, with the majesty** I mentioned, placed in the priest's hands ... I understood this **soul** to be in **mortal sin** ... The Lord told me to pray for him and that He had permitted it so I might understand the **power** of the **words of consecration**, how **God is present**, however evil the priest who recites them may be...and that I might see His great goodness since He places Himself in the **hands of His enemy**... I understood how much more priests are obliged to be good than others... how deplorable to receive this most Blessed Sacrament unworthily and how much the devil is **lord** over a soul in mortal sin ... it brought me an understanding of what I owed God ... May He be blessed forever and ever.

24-Another time... I was at a place where a **person** had **died** who for many years had lived a **wicked life**. He had been sick for two years, and in some things had made **amends**. He died without **confession**, but...it didn't seem he would be condemned. While the body was being wrapped in its shroud, I saw many **devils** take that body... and were playing with it and punishing it.... It was **buried** with the **honor**... accorded to all. I reflected on God's goodness, He didn't want the soul **defamed**, but wanted the fact that it was His enemy **concealed**.

25-...when they put the **body** in the **grave**, there was a multitude of devils ready to take it... may this site be seen by all in an **evil state** ... as it would prove a powerful help toward living a good life. All of this gives me a greater knowledge of what I **owe God** and what He **freed me** from...

26- ... I shall mention only a few **visions of the dead** as knowing about them isn't necessary for everyone's benefit...

I was told someone once from our provincial was dead... I was indebted to him for some good deeds. He was a person of many virtues... but I felt a lot of disturbance fearing for his **salvation** as he had been a superior for twenty years...and having **souls in one's charge involves a lot of danger**. I went to an oratory and offered up for him **all the good I had done in my life**... and asked the Lord to supply from his merits what was necessary for him to be **freed from purgatory**.

27-While beseeching the Lord for this, it seemed the person came out from the depths of the earth at my right side and then **ascended to heaven** with the greatest happiness... and though advanced in years, he appeared to be about **thirty**... I was extremely consoled...though I didn't neglect to get others to pray for him, I couldn't do so with eagerness as I had seen this vision...

28-One of the nuns in the house, a great servant of God, had been dead less than two days. A nun was reciting a reading from the Office of the dead...andI was standing next to her. Half way through the reading, I saw the nun who had died, her soul was **going to heaven**. This was not an **imaginative vision** as the former one...but as certain as one.

29- Eighteen to twenty years prior, a nun died in the house I was in. She had always been sick...and most virtuous. I thought she would not enter purgatory...while reciting the Office before her burial, I understood **she departed from purgatory and went to heaven**...

30- While at a college of the Society of Jesus, a brother died in that house that night. While praying for him and hearing Mass, a deep recollection came over me; I saw him **go to heaven in great glory**, and the Lord along with him...

31-Another friar from our order, a truly good friar, was seriously ill; while at Mass I **became recollected** and saw he was dead. He died the hour I saw him. He didn't enter purgatory...He was a friar who had observed his vows well and the **Bulls of the order about not entering purgatory** were

beneficial to him...**a friar doesn't consist in the habit...**but in enjoying the **state of higher perfection**, which is what it **means to be a friar**.

32-... But of all that I have seen I haven't known any soul that **did not enter purgatory**, with the exception of the soul of this father, the holy Friar Peter of Alcantara and the Dominican father I mentioned. In some cases, the Lord was pleased that I behold the **degrees of glory** and the **places assigned to them**. Great is the **difference** that lies between the glory of some and that of others. Amen