

The Second Dwelling Places

Chapter 1 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Discusses the importance of perseverance if one is to reach the final dwelling places; the great war the devil wages; and the importance of taking the right road from the beginning. Offers a remedy that has proved very efficacious.

Let's speak about the soul that enters the second dwelling places and what such a soul does in them...

2. This stage pertains to those who have already begun to **practice prayer** and have understood how important it is **not** to stay in the first dwelling places. But they still don't have the **determination** to remain in this second stage without **turning back**, for they don't avoid the occasions of sin. This **failure** is quite dangerous. These souls have received a good deal of **mercy** ... as sometimes they seek to **escape** from snakes and poisonous creatures (worldly temptations), and they understand it is good to **avoid** them.

These rooms involve much **more effort** than do the first, though there is not as much **danger** that souls seem to recognize, and there is **hope** of entering further into the **castle**... These rooms involve **more effort** because those in the first dwelling places are like **deaf-mutes**. They who endure not speaking more easily than those who **hear** but cannot **speak** ... These souls are able to **hear** the Lord when He **calls** as they are getting closer to where His Majesty dwells ... His mercy and goodness are so bountiful; whereas we are occupied in our **worldly pastimes** ... and still **falling into sin** and **rising again**. These **beasts** are so poisonous, dangerous and noisy that it would be a wonder if we kept from ... falling over them. Yet this Lord desires intensely that we **love Him** and **seek His company**... so He calls us to draw **near**... His **voice** is so sweet that the poor soul dissolves at not

immediately doing what He commands. Thus, His **voice** is a greater **trial** than **not hearing it**.

3. ... These **appeals** and **calls** ... come through **words spoken** by other good people, or through **sermons**, or **good books** ... or through **illnesses** and **trials** or also through a **truth** He teaches during the brief moments we spend in prayer. However lukewarm these moments... God esteems them highly ... Don't underestimate this first favor, nor should you **lose hope** if you do **not respond to Him** at once. His Majesty knows well how to wait ... especially when He sees **perseverance** and **good desires** ... One gains much through perseverance. But the attacks made by the devils ... afflict the soul more in these rooms than in the previous ones ... In this stage the devils represent these snakes (worldly things) ... as though almost eternal. They bring to mind the esteem one has in the world, one's friends and relatives, one's health ... and a thousand other **obstacles**.

4. O Jesus, what an uproar the devils instigate here! And the **afflictions** of the poor soul: it doesn't know whether to continue or to return to the first rooms. **Reason** ... shows the soul that it is **mistaken** in thinking that things of the **world** are not worth anything when **compared** to what it is **aiming after**. **Faith** teaches the soul about where it will find **fulfillment**.

As for the **three faculties** of the soul, the **memory** shows it where all worldly pursuits end, holding before it death ... showing it ... how quickly the dead are forgotten by all ... and how their graves are walked upon ... The **will** is inclined to **love** seeing countless signs of love ... it especially keeps in mind how this **true Lover** never leaves it, accompanying it and giving it **life** and **being**. The **intellect** tells the soul of its certainty that **outside this castle neither security nor peace** will be found ... and that its own house is so filled with blessings to be enjoyed if it wants. The intellect will

also ask who it is that finds all he needs in his own house and who has a **guest** who will make him lord over all goods **provided** he **avoids going astray** like the prodigal son.

5. These are **reasons** for conquering the devils ... The whole world's **habit** of getting involved in **vanities** ruins everything! Our **faith** is so **dead** that we desire what we see more than what faith tells us ... These **poisonous things** ... are the cause of much **misfortune** ... Clearly many **remedies** are necessary to cure us ... Certainly the soul undergoes **great trials** here. If the devil ... realizes that the soul has all it needs in its **temperament** and **habits** to **advance far**, he will gather all hell together to make the soul go back outside (the castle).

6. Ah, my Lord! Your help is necessary here; without it, we can do nothing. In your mercy, do not ... allow this soul to suffer **deception** and give up what was begun. Enlighten it that it may see how all its **good** is within this **interior castle** and that it may turn away from **bad companions**. It's a wonderful thing for a person to talk to those who speak about this interior castle ... He can talk so much with those closer to the center that they will bring him to where they are (in the castle). Let the soul always heed the warning not to be **conquered**. If the devil sees that it has a **strong determination** to **lose its life** ... and all he offers it ... he will abandon it much more quickly. Let the soul be **manly** ... and **determined to fight** with all the devils and realize that there are not better weapons than the **cross**.

7. ... It's so **important** ... that souls shouldn't be thinking about **consolations** at this **beginning stage**. It would be a very poor way to start **building so precious an edifice**. If the foundation is on sand, the whole building will fall to the ground. These souls will always be **dissatisfied** and **tempted**. These are not the dwelling places where it **rains manna**; those lie further ahead ... It's amusing that though we still

have a thousand ... **imperfections** and our virtues have hardly begun to grow ... we are not yet **ashamed** to **seek spiritual delights in prayer** or to **complain about dryness** ... Embrace the cross Christ carried ... this must be your task ... Suffer more for Him, and you will be rewarded that much more. As for favors ... thank Him for it is as you would for something freely given.

8. ... His Majesty knows best what is suitable for us. There's no need for us to be **advising** Him about what He should give us ... The whole **aim** of any person who is **beginning prayer** ... and don't forget this, because it's very important ... should be that he work and prepare himself with **determination** and every possible **effort** to **bring his will into conformity with God's will**. Be certain that ... the **greatest perfection** attainable along the spiritual path lies in this conformity. It is the person who lives in more perfect conformity who will receive more from the Lord and be more advanced on this road. Don't think that in what concerns perfection there is some mystery or things unknown or still to be understood, for in **perfect conformity to God's will lies all our good** ... The Lord often desires that **dryness** and **bad thoughts afflict** and **pursue** us without our being able to get rid of them. Sometimes He even permits reptiles (worldly choices) to bite us so that we may know how to **guard ourselves better** and that He may prove whether we are greatly **grieved** by having **offended** Him.

9. ... If you **fall** don't become **discouraged** and stop **striving to advance**. For ... God will draw out good. Even if we didn't see ... the great **harm** a **dissipated life** does to us through any other means than through this assault ... in order to be brought back to **recollection**, that would be enough ... We have so many ... true friends ... (the faculties of the soul) with whom we must live ... But ... they seem to be **warring** against us because of what our **vices** have done to them. Peace, peace, the Lord said ...

If we don't find peace in our own house we'll not find it outside ... I ask those who have not begun to **enter within themselves** to do so; and those who have begun, not to let the war make them turn back ... Let them trust in the mercy of God and not in themselves, and they will see how His Majesty brings them from the dwelling places of one stage ... to a land where these wild animals (the world's temptations) cannot touch or tire them ... And they shall enjoy ... blessings even in this life ...

10. ... I've written ... about how to **conduct yourselves** in **disturbances** set up by the devil and how to always recollect yourself with **gentleness** if your recollection is going to be more **continual**... Provided that we don't give up, the Lord will guide everything for our benefit, even though we may not find anyone to teach us. There is no other **remedy** for this **evil** of giving up prayer than to **begin again** ...

11. Someone could think that if **turning back** is so bad it would be better **never to begin** but to remain **outside the castle** ... The **door of entry** to this castle is **prayer** ... It is foolish to think that we will enter heaven without entering into ourselves, coming to know ourselves, reflecting on our misery and what we owe God, and begging Him often for mercy ... If we never look at Him or reflect on what we owe Him and the death He suffered for us, I don't know how we'll be able to know Him or do works in His service. And what value can faith have without works? And without joining them to the merits of Jesus Christ, our Good? May it please His Majesty to give us understanding of how much we cost Him, of how the servant is no greater than his master, and that we must work in order to enjoy His glory. And we need to pray for this understanding so that we aren't always entering into temptation. Amen