

The Fourth Dwelling Places

Chapter 1 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Discusses the difference between consolations (or feelings of tenderness) in prayer and spiritual delights. Tells of her happiness on learning the difference between the mind (imagination) and the intellect. This knowledge is very beneficial for anyone who is greatly distracted in prayer.

In order to begin to speak of the fourth dwelling places I really need to entrust myself ... to the **Holy Spirit** and beg him to **speak for me** ... that I may say something about the remaining rooms in a way that you will understand. For **supernatural experiences** begin here. These are something most **difficult to explain**, if His Majesty doesn't do so. I wrote another book (Life) about fourteen years ago, in which I dealt with these experiences based on my knowledge at the time. I think I have a **little more light** about these **favours** the Lord grants to some souls, **knowing how to explain them is a different matter**...

2. These dwelling places are closer to where the **King** is so their **beauty is greater**. There are things to **see** and **understand** that are so **delicate** that the **intellect** is incapable of finding words to explain them... It seems to reach these dwelling places one will have had to live in the others a long while ... but there is **no certain rule** ... the **Lord gives when He desires, as He desires and to whom He desires**. Since these blessings belong to Him, He does no injustice to anyone.

3. Poisonous creatures (or worldly temptations) rarely enter these dwelling places. When they do, they do no **harm** but are rather an occasion of **gain**. It is **better** when they do **enter** and **wage war** as the devil could **deceive** with **spiritual delights** (of his own making) if there were

no temptations. The soul would not gain so much either; all things contributing to its merit (that of facing temptation) would be removed, and it would be left in **habitual absorption**. A soul in **one continual state** is not **safe** nor is it possible during this exile for the spirit of the Lord to be in one fixed state.

4. Let me speak now about the difference in prayer between **consolations** and **spiritual delights**. It seems the term consolations can be given to experiences we acquire ourselves through **meditation** and **petitions to the Lord** ... although God does have a hand in them ... for without Him we can do nothing. The consolations arise from the **virtuous work** we perform ... It seems that we have earned them through our own effort ... If we reflect upon this ... we experience the same joyful consolations in many things that can happen to us on earth; **for example**: when someone suddenly inherits a great fortune; when we suddenly see a person we love very much; ... or when you see your husband or brother or son alive after someone told you he was dead.

I have seen the flow of great tears from great consolations and this has happened to me ... Just as these **joyful consolations** are **natural**, so are those given by God, but those from God are of a nobler kind ... In sum, **joyful consolations in prayer** begin in our **human nature** and **end in God**.

The spiritual delights however begin in God but human nature feels and enjoys them as much as it does the joyful consolations—and much more. O Jesus, how I long to know how to explain this! I discern a very recognizable difference but lack the knowledge to explain myself. May the Lord do so.

5. I remember a line we say in Prime ... *Cum Dilatasti cor meum* (or You have expanded my heart). If you have had this experience these words are sufficient to see the **difference** between **consolations** and **spiritual delights** ... the **consolations** do **not expand** the heart, but rather seem to **constrain** it a little ... Some anxious tears

come and it seems that they are brought on by the passions. I don't know much about these passions of the soul ... If only I knew how to explain myself ... Knowledge and learning are a great help in everything.

6. My experience with **joyful consolations** that come during **meditation** is that if I began to weep over the Passion, I didn't know how to stop until I had a **severe headache** ... and the same thing happened over my sins ... As I have said, these consolations **end in God**... and are to be esteemed if there is **humility**...

For the most part, the souls in the previous dwelling places (1,2,3) have these **devout feelings** as they mainly work with the **intellect**, engaging in **discursive thought** (reflection) and **meditation** ... as nothing further has been given them; it would however be good if they engaged ... in **praising** God and **rejoicing** in His goodness ... and in **desiring** His honor and glory as these acts are **great awakeners of the will** ... When the Lord gives such souls these acts, it would be advised that they **not** abandon them to finish the usual meditation.

7. ... In order to profit by this path and ascend to the dwelling places we desire, the important thing is **not to think much but to love much**; and so **do that which best stirs you to love**. Perhaps we don't know what love is ... it doesn't consist in great **delight** but in desiring with strong **determination to please** God in everything, in striving ...not to **offend** Him, and in asking Him for the advancement of the **honor** and **glory** of His **Son** and the **increase** of the **Catholic Church**. These are the **signs of love** ...Remember, all is not lost if you become a little distracted!

8. ... Through experience, I have come to understand that the **mind** (or imagination, an internal sense) is **not** the **intellect**... This understanding brought me no small consolation... Ordinarily the **mind** (imagination) flies about quickly, for only God can hold it fast ... I think I have seen that the **faculties of my soul** (will, intellect,

memory) were **occupied** and **recollected** in **God** while my **mind** (imagination) was **distracted** ...

9. ... Many things we suffer on this path come from **lack of knowledge** ... Terrible trials are suffered because **we don't understand ourselves** ... This lack of knowledge causes the **afflictions** of many people who engage in prayer ... even causing the complete **abandonment of prayer**.

People don't reflect and recognize that we have an **interior world** ... and we simply cannot stop our **mind** (imagination) and when the **faculties** of the soul (intellect, memory and will) join the **mind**, we feel **lost** and that we have **wasted the time spent before God**. But the **soul (faculties of...)** is perhaps completely joined with Him in the dwelling places very close to the center while the **mind** is on the outskirts of the castle ... As a result, we should not be disturbed; nor should we abandon prayer. For the most part, all the trials and disturbances come from not understanding ourselves.

10. While writing this, I'm thinking about what's going on in my **head** with the great **noise** ...It makes it almost impossible for me to write what I was ordered to. It seems as if there are in my head many **rushing rivers** ... and many **little birds** and **whistling sounds** ... in the **upper part of the head** where ... the **higher part** of the **soul** is... All this turmoil in my head doesn't hinder prayer ... but the soul is completely taken up in its **quiet, love, desires** and **clear knowledge**.

11. ...If the **superior part** of the **soul** is in the **superior part** of the **head**, why isn't the soul disturbed? Well, this I don't know ...However, the **pain** is felt when **suspension** (or being overcome by God) does **not** accompany the prayer ... It would be very bad if I were to abandon everything on account of this obstacle. And so it isn't good for us to be **disturbed** by our **thoughts** ... let us be **patient** and **endure** them for the

love of God since we are also **subject** to eating and sleeping without being able to avoid it, which is quite a **trial**.

12. Let us recognize our **misery** and **desire** to go where no one will taunt us ... It seems to me that all the **contempt** and **trials** one can endure in life cannot be compared to these **interior battles**. Any **disquiet** and **war** can be suffered if we find **peace** where we live ... The **Lord** brings us to the place where the miseries will not taunt us. Even in this life, the Lord **frees the soul** from these **miseries** when it reaches the **last dwelling place** ... if God wills.

13. These **miseries** ... were something very painful for me... but it is an **unavoidable** thing and should not be a disturbance or affliction for you. We must let the millclapper (such a noisy bird) go clacking on, and we must continue grinding our flour and not fail to work with the **will** and the **intellect**.

14. There is a more and a less to this obstacle according to one's health and age ... We must practice **patience**. And since... paying no attention to these thoughts doesn't suffice, I don't think the time spent in explaining these things ... is time lost. But until the Lord wants to enlighten us, these counsels will be of little help ... Let's not blame the soul for what a **weak imagination, human nature, and the devil cause**.
AMEN