

The Fourth Dwelling Places

Chapter 2 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Continues on the same subject and explains through a comparison the nature of spiritual delight and how this is attained by not seeking it.

God help me with what I have undertaken! I've already forgotten what I was dealing with, for business matters and poor health have forced me to set this work aside just when I was at my best.... Everything will come out confused because I just can't go back to read it over...

It seems to me I have explained the nature of **consolations** in the spiritual life. They are and sometimes **mixed** with our own **passions** ... sometimes the force of these passions can even cause nosebleeds ... But they must be consoling, for the whole experience ends in the **desire to please God** and **enjoy His Majesty's company**.

2. ... **Spiritual delight in God** or the **prayer of quiet** are different however ... Let's consider, for a better understanding, that we see **two founts with two water troughs**...

3. These two troughs are **filled with water in different ways**; with **one**, the water comes from far away through many aqueducts and the use of much ingenuity; with **the other**, the source of the water is right there, and the trough fills without any noise. If the spring is **abundant** as this one is, the water **overflows** once the trough is filled, forming a large stream. There is no need of any skill ... water is always flowing from the spring.

The water coming from the **aqueducts** is comparable to **consolations**... that are drawn from **meditation**. We obtain them through thoughts ... that **tire the intellect**. Consolations then, come from our own

effort and noise is made when the benefits the consolations cause in the soul need to be replenished.

4. With this other fount, the water comes from its own **source** which is **God** ... When He is pleased to grant some **supernatural favor** – He produces this delight with the greatest **peace** and **quiet** and **sweetness** in the very **interior** part of ourselves ... The happiness and delight are **not experienced in the heart** as are earthly consolations ... The **delight ends up filling everything**; the water overflows through all the dwelling places and faculties until reaching the body. That is why I said that it **begins in God** and **ends in ourselves**... and so the whole exterior man ends up enjoying this spiritual delight and sweetness.

5. I was thinking about the verse *Dilatasti cor meum*, which says that the heart was expanded. I don't think the experience is something that rises from the heart, but from another part still more interior, as from something **deep**. I think this must be from the **center of the soul** ...

6. To return to the verse, what I think is helpful is the **idea of expansion**. It seems that since this **heavenly water** begins to **rise** from this **spring** ... **deep within us**, it **swells** and **expands** our whole **interior being**, producing great **blessings**; the soul perceives a **fragrance**; let's say that in the **interior depth** there is a **brazier giving off sweet-smelling perfumes**. **No light** is seen, nor is the **place** seen where the brazier is; but the **warmth** and **fragrant fumes** spread through the **entire soul** ... The **body** shares in them ... but **no heat is felt**, nor is there the **scent of any perfume**. The experience is more **delicate** than any experience of these things ... For those who have not experienced this, understand that they do happen and are felt this way. The soul understands them more clearly ... The spiritual delight is not something that can be imagined ... as we cannot acquire it on our own. This experience makes us realize that it is fashioned from the **purest gold of divine**

wisdom. In my opinion, the **faculties** are not united but absorbed and looking through in wonder at what they see.

7. It's possible that in dealing with these interior matters I might **contradict** something I said elsewhere. That is no surprise because in the almost fifteen years since I wrote the Life, the Lord may have given me a **clearer understanding** of these matters than I had before. I could be mistaken, now as then, ... but I only speak of what I understand.

8. It seems clear to me that the **'will'** must somehow be united with **God's will**. But it is in the **effects** and **deeds** following afterward that one discerns the **true value of prayer**; there is no better **crucible** for **testing prayer**. It is quite a **favor** from the Lord if the person **receiving** it, **recognizes** it, and a great value if he **doesn't turn back**. You will at once desire to obtain this prayer, my daughters, ... it is good to try to understand how we can obtain such a favor; so, I will tell you what I understand about this prayer.

9. ... After you have done what should be done by those in the previous dwelling places: **humility! humility!** By this means the Lord allows Himself to be **conquered** with regard to anything we want from Him. The **first sign** for seeing whether or not you have **humility** is that you **do not think** you **deserve** these **favors** and **spiritual delights** from the Lord or that you **will receive** them in your lifetime.

You ask me how then can one obtain them without seeking them. ... For the following **reasons** there is no better way ... of not striving for them:

First, because **loving God without self-interest** is the initial thing necessary for such favors;

Second, because there is a slight **lack of humility** thinking that for our **miserable services** these great favors can be obtained;

Third, because **authentic preparation** for these **favors** ... is the desire to **suffer** and

imitate the Lord rather than to have **spiritual delights**;

Fourth, because His Majesty is **not obliged** to give them to us ... Without these favors we can be saved, and He knows what is best for us and who truly loves Him. This is certain, I know ... Persons who walk by the **path of love** ... to serve the **Christ crucified** ... **refuse** to seek spiritual delights from Him but rather they **ask** Him not to give them these favors;

Fifth, because we would be **laboring in vain** ... no matter how much we **meditate** or how much we try to ... have tears, this water doesn't come in such a way. It is **only given** to whom God wills to give it and often when the soul is least thinking of it.

10. We belong to Him, daughters. Let Him **do whatever He likes** with us, bring us **wherever He pleases**. I really believe that whoever **completely humbles** himself and is **detached** ... will **receive** the favor of this water from the Lord and many other favors we don't know how to desire. May He be forever praised and blessed. AMEN