

## The Fourth Dwelling Places

### Chapter 3 (summary)

#### Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Deals with the prayer of recollection which for the most part the Lord gives before the prayer just mentioned (prayer of quiet). Tells about its effects and about those that come from that spiritual delight, given by the Lord, that was discussed in the previous chapter.

The effects of the prayer of quiet are many ... but first, I want to mention **another kind of prayer** that almost always **begins before** this one ... It is a **recollection** that also seems to be **supernatural** because it doesn't ... consist in any exterior thing ... one does close one's eyes and desire solitude ... The **edifice** is being built, **by means of this recollection** ... The senses and exterior things seem to be losing their hold because the soul is recovering what it had lost. (God?)

2. They say the soul enters within itself and, at other times it rises above itself ... Let's suppose that these **senses** and **faculties** (... I have already mentioned that these powers are the **people of this castle** ... and that they have **gone outside** and have walked for days and years with strangers- **enemies** of the well-being of the castle. Having seen their perdition, they've already begun to approach the castle but may not manage to remain inside because the **habit** of doing so is **difficult to acquire**. But still, they are not traitors, and they walk near the castle. Once the great **King**, who is in the center dwelling place of this castle, sees their good will, He desires in His wonderful mercy to bring them back to Him. Like a **good shepherd**, with a **whistle** so gentle that even they themselves almost fail to hear it. He makes them recognize **His voice** and stops them from going so far astray so that they will **return** to their dwelling place. And this

shepherd's whistle has such **power** that they abandon the exterior things in which they were **estranged** from Him and **enter** the castle).

3. I don't think I have ever explained it as clearly as I have now. When God grants the favor, it is a great help to **seek Him within** where He is found more easily... Don't think this recollection is acquired by the intellect striving to think about God within itself, or by the imagination imagining Him within itself. Such efforts are good and an excellent meditation ... But it isn't the **prayer of recollection** (supernatural) ... What I am speaking about comes in a **different way**. Sometimes before one begins to think of God, these people are already inside the castle (recollected) ... One noticeably senses a **gentle drawing inward** ... maybe like a hedgehog curling up or a turtle drawing into its shell ... **but** these creatures draw inward whenever they want. In the case of this recollection, it doesn't come when we want it **but when God wants to grant us the favor** ... It seems that His Majesty grants it to persons who are already beginning to **despise** the things of the world ... If we desire to make room for His Majesty, He will give not only this but more to those whom He begins to call to advance further.

4. Whoever experiences this prayer within himself, praise God greatly... for in so doing the soul is disposed to receive greater favors. This recollection prepares the soul to **listen** instead of striving to engage in discourse, strives rather to remain **attentive** and **aware** that the Lord is working in it. If His Majesty has not begun to absorb us ... the mind cannot be stopped ... for the mind to stop ... **love must already be awakened** ...

5. **First**, in the **work of the spirit**, the one who **thinks less** and has **less desire to act does more**. What we must do is **beg** ... and then lower our eyes and wait in **humility**. When we understand that He hears us ... then it is good to be **silent** since He has allowed us to remain near Him; ... We

mustn't become fools. The soul can be quite a fool when it tries to **induce** this prayer, and it is left much **drier** ... The Lord desires that we **beseech Him** and call to mind that we are **in His presence**; He knows what is suitable for us ... What He did not reserve for Himself are many **other efforts** we can make with His help, such as : penance, good deeds, and prayer ...

6. The **second reason** is that interior works are all **gentle** and **peaceful**; doing something **arduous**, or with any **force** would cause more harm than good ... Leave the soul in God's hands, let Him do whatever He wants with it ... with the greatest resignation to the will of God.

The **third reason** is the **effort** not to think of anything, will cause the mind to think much.

The **fourth reason** is that what is ... pleasing to God is that we be mindful of His honor and glory and forget ourselves ... When His Majesty desires the intellect to stop, He occupies it in another way and gives it a light ... so that it remains absorbed ... Since God gave us our **faculties** that we might work with them ... there is no reason to charm them; we should let them **perform their task** until God appoints them to another greater one.

7. What is most **fitting for the soul** ... is that, without any effort or noise, the soul should strive to cut down the rambling of the intellect—but not suspend either it or the mind; it is good to be aware that one is in God's presence and of who God is ... Let us not strive to understand the nature of this recollection, for it is given to the **will**. Let the soul enjoy it ... and often the intellect will be suspended, though for a very brief moment.

8. The reason the soul restrains itself in the **prayer of quiet** is because it doesn't understand what it desires; and so the **mind** (imagination) **wanders** from one extreme to the other, like a **fool** unable to rest in anything.

The **prayer of recollection** which often comes **before** the prayer of quiet (or spiritual delight) given by God, is much **less intense**. It is the **beginning** and the work of the **intellect** or **meditation** must not be set aside.

In the **prayer of quiet**, the **will** finds such **deep rest** in God that the **clamor** of the **intellect** (which is 'free') is quite a bother to it. But there is no need to pay any attention to this clamor or the **will** would lose much of what it enjoys. Let the **intellect** go and simply **surrender** into the arms of love and allow His Majesty to teach the soul. Almost all lies in finding oneself **unworthy** of so great a good and in being **occupied** with **giving thanks**.

9. To deal with the **prayer of recollection**, I put off dealing with the **effects in souls** to whom God gives the **prayer of quiet**.

An **expansion** or **dilation** of the soul may be understood from the example of a **fount** whose water doesn't overflow into a stream because ... the more water there is flowing into it, the **larger the trough becomes**.

So, with this prayer and other marvels God grants the soul, He enables it to keep everything within itself. Hence the **interior sweetness** and **expansion** can be **verified** because the soul is not tied down ... but has much more **freedom**.

So in not being **constrained** by a **fear of hell** ... the soul is left with **great confidence** that it will enjoy Him.

The **fear** of having to do **penance** and losing its health has disappeared. It now thinks it will be able to do all things in God. It also has a **deeper desire** to do **penance** now. The soul is **less afraid** of **trials** and its faith is more alive. It knows His Majesty will give it the **grace** and **patience** to suffer trials for Him. Sometimes it even **desires** these trials out of a desire to **do something** for God.

Ever more aware of God's grandeur, it considers itself to be more **miserable**. Compared to these spiritual delights from God, it now sees **worldly delights** as **filth**

and so gradually withdraws from them and becomes more a **master** of itself.

In **sum**, there is an **improvement** in all **virtues**. If it doesn't turn back to offending God; because if it does, all will be lost. Nor should it be understood that if God grants this favor once or twice all the good effects will happen. The soul must **persevere** in receiving them. In **perseverance lies all our good**.

10. One **strong warning** I give to anyone in this state is that he guard very carefully against **offending** God. In this prayer, the soul is still only a **suckling child**. If it turns from its mother's breasts, surely death awaits it.

This can happen to anyone who has received this prayer and then turned from prayer. He will go from bad to worse ...

The devil tries much harder for a soul of this kind ... for such a soul can do a lot of harm to him by getting others to follow it and become a great **benefit** to God's Church.

... These souls suffer much **combat**, and if they go astray, stray farther than others do. , ... May God deliver you, Sisters, from pride and vainglory. If the devil counterfeits God's favors, there will be no good effects.

11. Let me **warn** you about a danger, into which persons of prayer, especially women, fall. Some have a weaker constitution because of a great amount of penance, prayer and keeping vigil ... and their nature is **overcome**.

They feel some consolation **interiorly** and a languishing and weakness **exteriorly**, they think they are experiencing a **spiritual sleep** --- a prayer a little more intense than the prayer of quiet. They let themselves be absorbed ... and fancy that they are being carried off into **rapture**. But I call it being carried off into **foolishness**, as it amounts to nothing more than wasting time and wearing down one's health.

... One person remained eight hours in this state. By eating, sleeping and avoiding so much penance, the stupor resolved, for there was one who understood her. She had

misled her confessor and herself though not intending to deceive.

I truly believe that the devil was trying to gain ground ... and was beginning to gain no small amount.

12. It must be understood that when something is **truly from God** there is **no languishing in the soul** ... but rather the soul experiences deep feelings on seeing itself close to God. Nor does the experience last so long, but only a very short while — although one becomes absorbed again. In such prayer ... the body is not worn down nor is any external feeling produced.

13. If a soul **feels this languishing** ... it should give up so many hours of prayer ... and sleep and eat until their natural strength begins to return. If a soul's nature is so weak that this is not enough ... perhaps God wants it to practice the **active life** ... and so to get busy with different duties ... and avoid too much solitude ... This in itself will be quite a **mortification** ... and how the soul bears this is the way the Lord wants to **test its love for Him**. He will be pleased to give its strength back after a time, if not, the soul will gain through **vocal prayer** and **obedience** and will merit what it would have merited otherwise, and perhaps more.

14. ... I have greatly enlarged upon this dwelling place because it is the one which more souls enter. It is where the **supernatural** and the **natural** are **joined** thus allowing the devil to do more harm.

This is not the case in the remaining dwelling places. May His Majesty be forever praised. AMEN