

The Third Dwelling Places

Chapter 1 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Treats of what little security we can have while living in this exile, even though we may have reached a high state, and of how we should walk with fear. This chapter has some good points.

What shall we say to those who through **perseverance** and the **mercy of God** have **won these battles** and have entered the rooms of the third stage, if not: Blessed is the man who fears the Lord? ... If he doesn't turn back he is ... on the **secure path to his salvation** ... Here we will see how **important** it was to **win** the previous **battles** ...

2. It is a great misery to have to live a life where we must always walk like those whose enemies are at their doorstep ... O my Lord and my Good, how is it that You want us to desire so miserable a life ... unless there is **hope of losing it for You** or of **spending it ... in Your service** or ... of **understanding** what **Your will** is? ...

3. ... I am writing something for those who can teach me. Doing so has been a hard command to obey! ... I can only boast in His mercy ... trust in the merits of His Son and of the Virgin, His Mother, whose habit I wear ... and you wear ... You truly belong to our Lady ... You have such a good Mother. Imitate her ... your Patroness ...

4. But one thing I advise you: not because you have such a Mother ... should you feel secure ... Don't pay any attention to the enclosure and the penance in which you live or feel safe ... that you are always conversing with God and practicing continual prayer ... withdrawn from the world ... These practices are all good, but not a sufficient reason ... to stop fearing. So continue to this verse ... *Beatus vir qui timet Dominum* (Blessed is the man who fears the Lord).

5. ... Concerning **souls** who have **entered the third dwelling places** ... I believe that

through the goodness of God there are **many of these souls in the world**. They long to **not to offend** His Majesty, even guarding against **venial sins**; they are fond of doing **penance** and of setting aside periods of **recollection**; they spend their time well, practicing **works of charity** toward their neighbors; and are very **balanced** in their **speech** and **dress** and in **governing** their households ... Certainly, this is a state to be desired ... There is no reason why **entrance** even into the **final dwelling place** should be denied these souls, nor will the Lord deny them this entrance if they desire it ...

6. ... We all say that we want this good. But since there is need of still more for the soul to **possess the Lord completely**, it is **not enough** to say we want it; just as this was not enough for the **young man** (the rich young ruler) whom the Lord told what one must do to be **perfect** ... **We are literally like him**; and ... the great **dryness in prayer** usually comes from this ... In all things we have to let God be the judge ... These souls realize that they wouldn't commit a sin for anything... and that they conduct their lives and households well, but they cannot accept patiently that the **door of entry** to the place where our King dwells be closed to them who consider themselves His servants ... Don't let your desire be for so much that ... you are left with nothing. Behold the Saints who entered this King's chamber, and you will see the **difference between them and us**. Don't ask for what you have not deserved, nor should it enter our minds that we have merited this favor however much we may have served—we who have offended God.

7. Oh, **humility, humility!** ... I cannot help but think that anyone who makes such an issue of this **dryness** is a little **lacking in humility** ... Let the **Lord prove us**, for He knows well how to do this ... Let us speak now of those souls whose lives are so well ordered and we shall see that we have no reason to complain about God ... If, like the young man in the Gospel, we turn our backs

and go away **sad** when the Lord tells us what we must do to be **perfect**, what do you want His Majesty to do? He must give **reward in conformity with the love we have for Him** ... which is proved by **deeds**. And don't think He needs our works; He needs the **determination** of our **wills**.

8. We seem to think that everything is done when we willing take ... the **religious habit** and **abandon all worldly things** ... for Him ... This renunciation is a good enough preparation if one **perseveres** ... and doesn't **turn back** and become involved in the **vermin** (worldly things) of the first rooms, even if it be only in desire. There is no doubt that if a person perseveres in this ... **detachment** from all worldly things, he will reach his **goal**. But this perseverance includes the condition ... that you consider yourselves **useless servants** ... and believe that the Lord is not under any obligation to grant you ... favors. Shouldn't we consider ourselves **lucky** to be able to repay something of what we owe Him for all His service towards us? ... He did nothing else but serve us all the time He lived in this world. And yet we ask him again for favors and gifts.

9. Reflect a great deal ... on some of the things ... pointed out ... so that out of **dryness** you may **draw humility** --- and not disquiet... Be convinced that where humility is truly present God will give **peace** and **conformity** --- even though He may never give consolations — by which one will walk with greater **contentment** ... Often ... the divine Majesty gives these **consolations** to weaker souls; although I think we would not exchange these consolations for the **fortitude** of those who walk in **dryness**. We are fonder of consolations than we are of the cross. Test us, Lord ... that we may know ourselves. AMEN