

The Third Dwelling Places

Chapter 2 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Continues on the same topic; deals with dryness in prayer; with what, in her opinion, might take place at this stage; how it is necessary to test ourselves; and with the fact that the Lord does try those who are in these dwelling places.

1. I have known some souls ... who have reached this state and lived many years in this **upright and well-ordered way** both in body and in soul ... Then, His Majesty will **try them** in some **minor matters**, and they will go about so **disturbed and afflicted** that it puzzles me and even makes me fearful. It is **useless** to give them **advice**, since they have engaged so long in the **practice of virtue** they think they can **teach others** and that they are more **justified in feeling disturbed**.

2. In sum, I have found neither a way of **consoling** nor a **cure** for such persons other than to show them **compassion** in their **affliction** ... seeing them subject to so much **misery** ... They think they are **suffering** these things **for God** ... they don't realize their **disturbance** is an **imperfection** ... There is no reason for us to be surprised at what they experience ... God often desires that His **chosen ones** feel their **wretchedness**, so He **withdraws His favor** a little ... The nature of this **trial** is immediately understood, for they recognize their fault very clearly. Sometimes, seeing their fault distresses them more than the thing that disturbs them ... as they realize that they are affected by earthly happenings ... This **distress** ... is a great **mercy** from God ... as it is very beneficial for **humility**.

3.... They **canonize** these feelings ... and would like others to do so ... Let me mention some of these **feelings**, so that we may **test ourselves** before God tests us. It is

very important to be prepared and to have understood ourselves beforehand.

4. A **rich person** ... happens to **lose his wealth**, but ... he doesn't lack necessities for himself and for ... his household; he even has a **surplus**. If he should go about as **worried and disturbed**... as he would be if not even a piece of bread were left, how can our Lord ask him to leave all for Him? The person makes the excuse that ... he wants these things for the **poor**. But I believe that God desires that he conform to the **divine will** ... and that he keep his **soul at rest rather than worry about charity** ... And if he doesn't do this ... he should understand that he **lacks freedom of spirit** ...

... The opportunity presents itself for him to acquire more wealth ... But if he strives for wealth and after possessing it, strives for **more and more**, however good the intention ... (he should have a good intention ... as he is a virtuous person of prayer), he need have **no fear of ascending to the dwelling places closest to the King**.

5. There is a similar occurrence when an opportunity presents itself for these persons to be **despised** or to lose a little **honor**. God often grants them the **favor of enduring** such a **trial**; He is fond of **favoring virtue publicly** so that virtue will not **lose esteem** or because they have **served Him** ... But they are left in such **disquiet** ... unable to be rid of this **disturbance**. God help me!

Aren't they the ones who considered how the **Lord suffered**, how **good suffering** is, and who have desired it? They would like everyone to live a life as well ordered as theirs; and please God they will not think their grief is for the faults of others and turn it into something meritorious.

6. ... From these examples, Sisters, many **lessons** can be learned ... Through them you will understand if you are truly **stripped** of what you have left behind. For little things happen to allow you to **test and know** if you are the **ruler of your passions** ... the whole affair lies ... in **striving to practice the virtues**, in **surrendering our will** to God in

everything, in bringing our life in line with **His will** and in desiring that His will and not ours be done ... **Humility** is the **ointment** for our wounds for if we have humility ... though there be a time of delay, the surgeon, who is our Lord, will come to heal us.

7. The **penance** these souls do is **well balanced** like their lives ... They are very **discreet** in doing it ... so as not to **harm their health**. Have no fear that they will kill themselves, for their **reason** is still very much in **control**. **Love** has not yet reached the point of overwhelming reason. But let's use our reason to make ourselves **dissatisfied** with this way of serving God, always going **step by step**, for we'll **never finish this journey**... But, does it seem to you, daughters, that if we could make the journey from one land to another in eight days, that it would be **good** to take a year through wind, snow, rain and bad roads? Wouldn't it be **better** to make the journey all at once? ... Please God that I may have passed beyond this stage, for often it seems I haven't.

8. Since we are so **guarded**, everything **offends** us because we **fear** everything; so we don't dare go further—as if we could reach these dwelling places while leaving to other persons the trouble of treading the path for us ... Since this is not possible ... let's **abandon our reason** and **our fears into His hands** ... We should care only about **moving quickly** so as to **see this Lord** ... The journey I am speaking of must be taken with **great humility** ... it should seem to us that we have **gone but a few steps** ... we should strive that others consider us the **most miserable of all**.

9. With **humility present**, this stage is a most excellent one. If humility is **lacking**, we will remain here our whole life ... For since we will not have **abandoned ourselves**, this state will be very ... burdensome ... weighed down with the mud of our **human misery**. This is not so with those who ascend to the remaining rooms ... where the Lord does not **fail to pay** ... in

consolations far greater than the comforts and distractions of life. However, I don't think He gives much **spiritual delight** unless to **invite** souls ... to prepare themselves to enter the remaining dwelling places.

10. It may seem to you that **consolations** and **spiritual delights** are the same, so why should I make this **distinction**? ... There is a very great difference between the two, that I'll speak of in the fourth dwelling places ... **Great solace** comes to souls God brings there ... **Humble souls** will be moved to give thanks while those **lacking in humility** will feel an **inner distaste** ... For **perfection** ... does not consist in **spiritual delights** but in **greater love** and in **deeds** done with great **justice and truth**.

11. You will wonder ... what purpose it serves to explain ... **interior favors** ... Well, I don't know but ask him who ordered me to write about them ... I am not **obliged to dispute with a superior but only to obey**... nor **would disputing with them be right** ... It was happiness enough for me to know ... that I was pleasing God in something. When I read in books of the delights and favors God grants souls who serve Him, I, a wretched soul, was moved to praise Him. Surely then good and humble souls will praise Him much more. And if one alone is led to praise Him even once ... it is good that this subject be mentioned so that we know of the happiness and delight that **we lose through our own fault**.

If these **favors** are **from God** they are **brimming over with love and fortitude** so you can **journey with less labor** and **grow** in the **practice of works and virtues**. Don't think it matters little to lose these favors through our **own fault**; when **isn't our fault** the Lord is just. He gives you through other paths what He keeps from you on this one because of what He knows, for His secrets are very hidden ... and what He does will without any doubt be what is most **suitable** for us.

12. It seems highly beneficial for those who are in this state ... to **study diligently how to be prompt in obedience**. It would also be a great thing for them to have someone whom they could consult so **as not to do their own will in anything. Doing our own will is usually what harms us...** It is wise to **seek out someone free of illusion about the things of the world ... to help us know ourselves.**

It also is encouraging for us to see others do what seems impossible for us ... Little bird fledglings ... do not soar immediately, but only little by little do they imitate the parent. This help is most beneficial ... these souls are close to the first dwelling places and could easily return to them. Their **fortitude** is not founded on **solid ground**, as those **tried in suffering ...and for whom the storms of the world are not to be feared** or who know not to **desire the consolations of the world**. But the souls we are speaking of here could when in great persecution, return to earthly consolations....

13. Let's look at our own faults and leave aside those of others, for this is very characteristic of persons with well-ordered lives to be shocked by everything. Perhaps we could learn from the one who shocks us what is most important though we may surpass him in external composure and our way of dealing with others. Although good, these things are not what is most important ... It is better to carry out what our rule says, and to strive to live always in **silence** and **hope** and let the Lord take care of these souls if we beseech Him to do so...May He be blessed forever. AMEN