

The Sixth Dwelling Places

Chapter 1 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Discusses how greater trials come when the Lord begins to grant greater favors. Mentions some and how those who are now in this dwelling place conduct themselves. This chapter is good for souls undergoing interior trials.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, let's speak of the **sixth dwelling places**, where the soul is now **wounded with love** for its Spouse and strives for more opportunities to be **alone** ... and rid of everything that can be an obstacle to this **solitude**.

The **meeting** (with His Majesty that took place in the fifth mansions) left such an **impression** that the soul's whole desire is to enjoy it again.

Nothing is **seen** with the eyes nor with the imagination; and I used the term '**meeting**' because of the comparison with the Sacrament of marriage.

The soul is now fully **determined** to take no other spouse. But the Spouse... wants it to desire this more; and He wants the betrothal to take place at a **cost**; it is the greatest of blessings.

For the soul to endure the **delay**, it needs the **pledge of betrothal** that it now has. Oh, God help me, what interior and exterior trials the soul suffers before entering the seventh dwelling place!

2. If a soul knew beforehand, its natural weakness would find it difficult to find the **determination** to **suffer** through the **trials** no matter the blessings, unless it had arrived at the seventh dwelling places. For once there, the soul **fears nothing** and is absolutely **determined** to **overcome** every obstacle for God. The reason being that so closely joined to His Majesty that it receives **fortitude** from this union.

Let's look at some of the **trials** one will certainly undergo ... for those who

sometimes enjoy the things of heaven will not live free of earthly trials that come in one form or another.

3. Looking at these trials may bring **consolation** to the soul going through them. They happen to souls to whom God grants similar **favors**. And, when suffering them it seems that all is **lost**.

Let's begin with the **smallest trials**. There is an outcry ... **gossip** like this: "She is trying to make out that she is a saint ... there are better Christians who don't put on all this outward show." ... Those she thought were her friends turn away from her ... taking the most painful bite at her: "that soul has gone astray ... she has deceived her confessors" A thousand kinds of ridicule ...

4. The soul feared that because of such gossip, no one would hear her confession ... What's worse is that these things do not pass quickly ... and advice is given to avoid any dealings with her.

Praise is just another **trial** as a few will speak well of that soul. But, the soul sees clearly that anything good is given by God and so praise is an **intolerable burden** at least in the beginning. Later on ... it is not so intolerable.

First, because the soul sees that people are as quick to say good things as they are bad, and, it pays more attention to the good than to the bad.

Second, more enlightened by the Lord that all good things are given by His Majesty, it turns to praise God ... as if it had seen the gift in another person.

Third, if it sees that some souls have benefited from seeing the favors God grants it ... and that a blessing might come to them.

Fourth, this soul looks out for the honor and glory of God more than its own. The initial **temptation** to believe these praises would destroy it are removed. **Dishonor** matters little to the soul if God is praised if only once come what may.

5. These **four reasons** and others greatly mitigate the pain of praises. It is, however,

an even **greater trial** to see oneself publicly considered as good.

When though, the soul reaches the **stage** where it pays little attention to **praise**, it pays even less to **disapproval**; it rejoices and finds the disapproval to be a very sweet music. An amazing truth!

Blame strengthens rather than intimidating the soul. Experience has already taught it the **gain of this path**.

It feels that His Majesty permits it to be **persecuted** for its own **benefit**. It clearly experiences the benefits of persecution and acquires a special and tender **love** for its persecutors. It sees them as greater friends than those who speak well of it.

6. The Lord is apt to send the **severest illnesses**, a greater trial especially when the pains are acute ... perhaps the **greatest exterior trial on earth** ... The soul would willingly accept any **martyrdom** rather than these sharp pains ... But God gives no more than what can be endured; and His Majesty gives **patience** first. Know however, that great sufferings and illnesses ... are the **usual** thing.

7. ... From the time the Lord began forty years ago to grant the favor mentioned, I have not spent even one day without pains and sufferings ... But I would always choose the **path of suffering**, if only to **imitate our Lord Jesus Christ** ... since there are always so many other **benefits**. Oh, were we to treat **interior sufferings**, the exterior sufferings would seem small, if the internal ones could be explained ... but it is impossible to explain how they come to pass.

8. Let us begin with the torment from a **confessor** ... one with **little experience** and who is **sure of nothing** and **fears everything**... He really becomes doubtful if he notices an **imperfection** in a soul ... for it seems to him that the soul to whom God grants these favors must be an **angel** ... All is condemned as coming from the devil or melancholy ...

The poor soul who is condemned by the confessor cannot help but be deeply tormented ... for it thinks that because of its sins God has allowed it to be deceived ... though it cannot believe the favor ... is from any other spirit than from God... Yet, the torment returns ... because the soul sees faults in itself ... When the confessor assures it, the soul grows **calm**, but the disturbance returns ... If the confessor contributes to the torment with more fear, the **trial** becomes almost **unbearable** – especially when there is **dryness** between favors ...

It seems to the soul that it has never been mindful of God ... and when it hears His Majesty spoken of, it seems as if it were hearing about a person far away.

9. All of this would be nothing, but there is the feeling of not being able to explain things to its confessors, that it has deceived them ... The soul's understanding is so darkened that it is incapable of seeing the truth and believes whatever its master, the imagination, presents to it ... It seems the Lord has given the devil license to try the soul, even to the point of making it believe itself rejected by God ...

Many things war against it ... it is comparable to the oppression suffered in hell, for there is no consolation ...

10. In sum, there is **no remedy** in this tempest but to wait for the **mercy of God**. For unexpectedly, with one word ... He so quickly calms the storm ... and it remains filled with **sunlight** and much more **consolation** ... The soul emerges praising our Lord who fought for victory. The soul knows that it did not fight ...it knows ... the very little we can do if the Lord abandons us.

11. ... This experience ... made the soul understand its **nothingness** ... It doesn't think it has any love of God or even ever had any. If it has done some **good**, or His Majesty has granted it some **favor**, it all seems to have been **dreamed up**. As for sins, it sees it has committed them.

12. O Jesus, what a thing it is to see this **forsaken soul** ... Earthly consolations are of little help ... Being rich in this case seems to be the situation of a person condemned to die ... for **no worldly delights** could alleviate this suffering but would only increase the torment that comes from above. Our great God wants us to know our **misery** and that **He is king**, very important for what lies ahead.

13. What then will this poor soul do if the torment goes on for many days? If it **prays**, it feels **no consolation** ... for consolation is not admitted into the soul's interior, nor is what one recites understood ...

This is definitely not the time for **mental prayer** as the faculties (intellect, memory, will) are incapable of it; rather **solitude** causes greater harm and being with others too is just another torment. The soul goes about **gloomy** and **ill-tempered** which is very noticeable to others.

These **spiritual afflictions** and **sufferings** are **indescribable**. The **best remedy** ... is to engage in **external works of charity** and to **hope in the mercy of God** who never fails those who hope in him. May He be blessed forever, amen.

14. ... However much the devils do, they do not manage to disable the faculties or disturb the soul in this way. In sum, they cannot do more than what the Lord allows them to do; and provided one doesn't lose one's mind, **all is small** compared to what was mentioned.

15. In these dwelling places, we shall be speaking of other **interior sufferings**, dealing with different kinds of **prayer** and **favours** from the Lord ... Some favours cause still more **severe suffering** ... but do not deserve to be called **trials** ... but are rather **great favours** from the Lord and, while receiving them, the soul understands that they are **beyond its merits**. This severe suffering comes so that the soul may enter the **seventh dwelling place**. It comes with many other sufferings ... but it would be impossible to speak of them all ... May the

Lord give His help for everything through the merits of His Son, amen.