

The Sixth Dwelling Places

Chapter 4 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Treats of when God suspends the soul in prayer with rapture or ecstasy or transport, which are all the same in my opinion, and how great courage is necessary to receive sublime favors from His majesty.

With all these trials ... what kind of calm can the poor little butterfly have? All these **sufferings** are meant to increase one's **desire** to enjoy the Spouse ... His Majesty ... is enabling the soul through these **afflictions** ... to have the **courage** to be joined with so great a Lord and to take Him as its **Spouse**.

2. You will laugh at my saying this and think it foolishness. It may seem **courage** is unnecessary, as any woman would have the courage to be married to the king. Perhaps to an earthly king; but to the **King of heaven**, there is need for more courage than you think.

Our nature is very **timid** ... and if God were not to give courage ... it would be **impossible** to receive that favor. Thus, you will see what His Majesty does to conclude this **betrothal**, which comes about when He gives the **soul raptures** that draw it out of its **senses**.

If the soul were to see itself so near this great majesty while in its senses, it would perhaps **die** ...

I want to put down here some **kinds of rapture** ... so that everything ... will be put down here together.

3. **One kind of rapture** is when the soul, though not in prayer, is touched by some **word** it remembers or hears about God. It seems His Majesty, from the **interior** of the **soul** makes the **spark increase**. He is moved with **compassion** seeing the soul **suffer** so long from its desire. All **burnt up**, the soul is **renewed** like the phoenix ... and it can believe that its **faults** are **pardoned**. Now

pure, the Lord **joins** the soul with Himself ... it has an **interior understanding** of what is happening but **cannot explain it afterwards**. In fainting or convulsions, nothing is understood either inwardly or outwardly.

4. ... The soul has never been so **awake** to the **things of God**, nor did it have such deep **enlightenment** and **knowledge** of His Majesty. This may seem **impossible** because if the **faculties** are so absorbed we can say they are **dead**, and likewise the **senses**, how can a soul **know** that it **understands** this **secret**? I don't know ...

In these **two dwelling places** (6 & 7) there is **no closed door** but because there are **things in the last** (7th) **not yet revealed** to those who have not reached it, I thought I would **divide** them.

5. When in this **suspension**, the Lord likes to show the soul some **secrets** about the **things of heaven**, and **imaginative visions**. It is able to **tell of them afterwards** because they remain impressed on the memory they are never forgotten. But, when the visions are **intellectual**, the soul does not know how to speak of them ... When, however, it is once again in possession of its **senses**, it **can say many things** about **intellectual visions**...

6. ... If **afterward** there is **no remembrance** of these sublime favors granted by the Lord ... what **benefit** do they have? ... Even though they are **unexplainable**, they are well **inscribed** in the very **interior** part of the soul and are **never forgotten**.

But if there is **no image** and the **faculties** do not understand, how can the visions be remembered? I don't understand this either; but I do understand that **some truths** about the **grandeur of God remain fixed in the soul** ...

Jacob when he saw the ladder ... must have understood other secrets that he did not know how to explain ...

7. Nor did Moses know how to describe all he saw in the bush ... But if God had not

shown **secrets** to his soul along with **certitude** that made him recognize and believe they were from God, Moses could not have entered into so many **severe trials**. But he must have understood such deep things ... that the vision gave him courage to do what he did for the people of Israel. We don't have to look for reasons to understand the hidden things of God. Since we believe He's is powerful ... we must believe our limited power will not understand His grandeurs. Let us praise Him, for He is pleased that we come to know some of them.

8. Let's use this **comparison**. You enter into the room of the king ... the **treasure chamber**, where there are countless kinds of glass and earthen vessels ... so arranged that they are seen upon entering.

Once I was brought to a room like this in the house of the Duchess of Alba ... and I ... wondered what benefit could be gained from all those things ...

Likewise with this favor, the soul, while it is **made one with God**, is placed in this **celestial room** that we must have interiorly ...since God abides within it.

Although the Lord must not want the soul to see these secrets every time it is in this ecstasy, for ... enjoying Him ... is sufficient for it, sometimes He is pleased that the **absorption decrease** and the soul see at once what is in that room.

After it **returns to itself**, the soul is left with that representation of the grandeurs it saw; but it cannot describe any of them ...

9. ... I am not dealing with an imaginative vision but with an **intellectual one** ... I hold that if in its **raptures** the soul **does not understand these secrets**, its raptures are not given by God ... In a rapture, believe me, God carries off for Himself the entire soul ... He begins showing it some little part of the kingdom that it has gained by being espoused to Him ... He does not want any hindrance from either the **faculties** or the from the **senses**, but He immediately commands the **doors** of all these dwelling

places to be **closed**; and **only the door to His dwelling place remains open** so that we can enter. Blessed be so much mercy...

10. ... If we hope to enjoy this blessing even in this present life, what are we doing? What is causing us to delay? What is enough to make us stop looking for this Lord... Oh, what a mockery everything in the world is if it doesn't lead towards this blessing ... It is all loathsome dung compared to these treasures that will be enjoyed without end. Nor are these anything in comparison with having as our own the **Lord of all the treasures of heaven and earth**.

11. Oh, human blindness! ... Let us **benefit** by our **faults** so as to know our **misery**, and they will give us **clearer vision** as did the mud to the blind man cured by our Spouse ... Let us increase our supplications that His Majesty may draw good out of our miseries so that we might be pleasing to Him.

12. ... Having reached these grandeurs of God ... I cannot help but feel very sorry to see what **we lose through our own fault**. Even though it is true that these are blessings that the Lord gives to whomever He wills, His Majesty would give them all to us **if we loved Him as He loves us** ...

13. Well, now, to get back to what I was saying, the Spouse commands that the **doors** of the **dwelling places** be **closed** and even those of the **castle** and the **outer wall**.

In desiring to carry off the soul, He takes away the **breath** ... so a person cannot speak at all. At other times everything is taken away at once, and the hands and the body grow cold so that the person does not seem to have any life, nor sometimes is it known whether he is breathing.

This situation lasts but a short while, I mean in its intensity; when this extreme suspension lets up a little, it seems the body returns to itself somewhat and is nourished so as to die again and give more life to the soul. Such an extreme ecstasy does not last long.

14. Though the **extreme ecstasy ends**, the **will** remains so absorbed and the **intellect** so

withdrawn, for a day or even days, that the latter seems incapable of understanding anything that does not lead to **awakening the will to love**; and the **will** is **wide awake** to this **love** and **asleep** to becoming **attached** to any **creature**.

15. When the **soul returns** completely to itself, what **bewilderment** and how intense its desires to be occupied in God ... What will be the **effects** of a favor as sublime as this? The soul would desire to have a thousand lives and employ them all for God. And that all on earth would be a tongue to help it praise Him. The desire to do penance is strong ... but the strength of love makes the soul feel that all that it has done amounts to little and sees clearly that the martyrs did not accomplish much in suffering the torments they did because with this help from our Lord, such suffering is easy. Hence these souls complain to His Majesty when no opportunity for suffering presents itself.

16. When this **favor** is granted them in **secret**, their esteem for it is great; when it is given in the **presence** of **other persons**, their **embarrassment** and **shame** are so strong ... over what others will think and this takes the soul away from what was being enjoyed.

For these persons know the malice of the world ... which will perhaps not see the experience ... as one where the Lord should be praised, but as an occasion for **rash judgments**.

It seems that the pain and embarrassment amount to a lack of humility ... What difference does it make what others think? ... One who was in this affliction heard from the Lord: "**Don't be afflicted, either they will praise Me or criticize you; and in either case you gain.**"

It seems that our Lord wishes all to understand that this soul is now His, and that no one should touch it. Well and good if its body, or honor, or possessions are touched for this soul draws honor for His Majesty out of everything. But that one touch the

soul — absolutely not; for if the soul does not withdraw from its Spouse ... He will protect it from the whole world and even from all hell.

17. I don't know if anything has been explained about the **nature of rapture**, for to explain it is completely **impossible** ... But I don't believe anything is lost by trying.

The **effects** in the **feigned rapture**, where the person is **deceived**, are very different and not in conformity with such a great blessing. Thus, the **true rapture** is looked upon unfavorably; and afterward the one to whom the Lord grants it, is justifiably **not believed**. May He be blessed forever, amen amen.