

The Fifth Dwelling Places

Chapter 3 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Continues on the same subject. Tells about another kind of union the soul can reach with God's help and of how important love of neighbor is for this union. The chapter is very useful.

... It must always be understood that one has to strive to go forward in the **service** of our Lord and in **self-knowledge**. For if a person does no more than **receive** this favor and if, ...she grows **careless** in her life and **turns aside** from the heavenly path, which consists of keeping the ten commandments, that which happens to the silkworm will happen to her. It gives forth the seed that produces other silkworms, and itself dies forever ... It is God's desire that a **favor** so great **not** be **given in vain**; if a person doesn't herself benefit, the favor will benefit others. Since the soul is left with **desires** and **virtues** ... it always **brings profit** to other souls as long as it **lives virtuously**; and they **catch fire** from its fire. Even if the soul loses this fire, the **inclination** to benefit others will remain, and the soul delights in explaining the favors God grants to whoever loves and serves Him.

2. ... How many there must be, like Judas, whom the **Lord calls** to the **apostolate** by communing with them, and like Saul, whom He calls to be kings, who through their own fault **go astray!**... In order to **merit** more and more and avoid **getting lost** like such persons, our security lies in **obedience** and **refusal to deviate** from **God's law**...

3. It seems that despite all that has been said about this dwelling place, the matter is still somewhat **obscure**. Since so much **gain** comes from entering this place, it is good to avoid giving the impression that those who do not experience the supernatural are left **without hope**. True union can be reached

with God's help, if we make the effort to obtain it by keeping our **wills** fixed on **God's will**. But how many of us say we already do this, ... that we don't want anything else and would die for this truth! ... If what you say is true you **will have obtained** this favor from the Lord, and you needn't care about the other **delightful union** (supernatural union). What is most valuable in the **delightful union** is that it **proceeds** from this **union** I am now speaking of. One cannot arrive at the delightful union if the **union** coming from being resigned to God's will is not very **certain**. Oh, how desirable is this union with God's will! Happy the soul that has reached it. Such a soul will live tranquilly in this life, and in the next. Nothing in earthly events afflicts it unless it finds itself in danger of **losing God** or sees that He is **offended** ... for this soul sees that the Lord knows what He is doing better than it knows what it is desiring.

4. There are **different kinds of sufferings**. Some **sufferings** are produced suddenly by our human nature, and the same goes for **consolations**, and even by the **charity of compassion** for **one's neighbor**, as our Lord experienced when He raised Lazarus. Being united with **God's will** doesn't take away these experiences ... These sufferings pass quickly. As with **consolations** in prayer, they do not seem to reach the **soul's depth** but only the **senses** and **faculties**. They are found in the previous dwelling places, but do not enter the last ones yet to be explained since suspension of the faculties is necessary to reach these. The Lord has the power to enrich souls through **many paths** and bring them to these dwelling places without using the **short cut** (delightful or supernatural union).

5. ... It is **necessary** for the **silkworm to die** ... In the **delightful** (supernatural) **union**, the experience of seeing oneself in so **new a life helps one to die**; in the **other union**, it's necessary that, while living in this life, we **put the silkworm to death** ... and this

requires a great deal of **effort** ... So, if you come out victorious, the **reward** will be much greater.

There is no reason to **doubt** the possibility of this death any more than that of **true union** with the **will of God**. This **union with God's will** is the union I have desired all my life; it is the union I ask the Lord for always and the one that is **clearest** and **safest**.

6. But alas ... how **few** there must be who reach it; although whoever **guards** himself from **offending** the Lord and has entered **religious life**, thinks he has done everything! But, there remain some **worms, unrecognized** until ... they have **gnawed** away the **virtues**. This happens through **self-love, self-esteem, judging one's neighbors** even in little things, a **lack of charity** for them, and not loving them as ourselves. Even though, **crawling along**, we fulfill our obligation and no sin is committed, we don't advance very far in what is **required** for **complete union** with the will of God.

7. What do you think **His will** is, daughters? That we be **perfect**. See what we **lack** to be **one with Him and His Father** ... The Lord doesn't have to grant us **delights** for this union; sufficient is what He has given us in His Son, who would teach us the way. Don't think the matter lies in my being so **conformed** to the **will of God** that if my father or brother dies I don't feel it, or if there are trials or sicknesses I suffer them happily ...

In our religious life the Lord asks of us only **two things: love of His Majesty and love of our neighbor**. These are what we must work for. By **observing** them with perfection, we do His will and so will be united with Him. But how far we are from doing these two things ... ! May it please His Majesty to give us His **grace** so that we might merit, if we want, to reach this state that lies **within our power**.

8. The most **certain sign** ... as to whether or not we are **observing** these **two laws** is whether we observe well the **love of**

neighbor. We cannot know whether or not we love God ... but we can know if we love our neighbor. Be certain that the more **advanced** you see you are in love for your **neighbor** the more **advanced** you will be in the love of **God**. The love His Majesty has for us is so great that to **repay us** for our love of neighbor He will in a thousand ways increase the love we have for Him.

9. ... If we **practice love of neighbor** with **great perfection**, we will have done everything ... But since our **nature is bad**, we will **not reach perfection** in the love of neighbor **if** that love doesn't rise from love of God as its **root**. Since this is so important ... let's try to understand ourselves even in little things, and pay no attention to any big plans ...

I say the same about **humility** and all the **virtues**. The devil would circle hell a thousand times to make us think we have a virtue when we don't. These **feigned virtues** never come without some **vainglory**. Whereas **virtues** from God are free of vainglory and of pride as well.

10. It is amusing sometimes to see certain souls who think ... they would like to be humiliated and publicly insulted for God, but then hide a tiny fault ... ; or, if they have not committed a fault but are charged with it --- God deliver us! ... It is in the **imagination** where the devil produces his wiles and deceits ...

We don't know how the **faculties** differ from one another and from the **imagination**, nor do we know about a thousand other things there are in regard to interior matters. How clearly one sees the degree to which **love of neighbor** is present in some, and how clearly one sees the deficiency in those who lack such perfection! If you were to understand how important this virtue is you wouldn't engage in any other study.

11. When I see souls earnest in trying to understand the prayer they have ... It seems they don't dare let their minds move or stir lest a bit of their spiritual delight and devotion be lost – it makes me realize how

little they understand of the way by which **union is attained** ...

Works are what the Lord wants! He desires that if you see a Sister who is sick to whom you can bring some relief, you have compassion on her and not worry about losing this devotion ... because you know it is your Lord's desire. This is **true union** with **His will**.

If you see a person praised, the Lord wants you to be much happier than if you yourself were being praised. This, indeed, is easy for you if you have **humility** you will feel sorry to see yourself praised ... When we see some **fault** in them, it is also good to be sorry and hide the fault as though it were our own.

12. ... **If we fail in love of neighbor we are lost** ... If you do not fail ... you will receive **union** from His Majesty.

When you see yourselves lacking in this love, though you have devotion and gratifying experiences that make you think you have reached this stage ... believe me you have **not** reached union.

Beg our Lord to give you this **perfect love of neighbor**. Let His Majesty have a free hand, for He will give you more than you know how to desire because you are striving and making every effort to do what you can about this love.

Force your will to do the **will of others** in everything though you may lose your rights; Forget your own good for their sakes no matter how much resistance your nature puts up.

Strive to accept work yourself to relieve your neighbor of it. Don't think it won't cost you anything ...

Look at what our Lord's love for us cost Him; to free us from death, He dies that most painful death of the cross. Amen