

The Sixth Dwelling Places

Chapter 11 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Treats of some desires God gives the soul that are so powerful and vehement they place it in danger of death. Treats also of the benefits caused by this favor the Lord grants.

Do you think that all these **favours** the Spouse has bestowed upon the soul will ... **satisfy** it for it to come to rest ... where it will die? No, **certainly not**; rather the butterfly is much worse.

Though the soul may have been receiving these **favours** for many years, it always moans ... because they leave it with **greater pain**.

The **reason** is that since it is getting to know ever more the **grandeurs of God**, it sees itself so **distant and far** from enjoying Him. The **desire** for the Lord **increases** much more.

Love increases in the measure the soul discovers how much this great **God deserves to be loved**. This desire continues to gradually grow so that it reaches a point of **great suffering**.

... One must not put **limits on God**; in a moment He can bring a soul to the lofty experience mentioned here. His Majesty has the power to do whatever He wants and is eager to do many things for us.

2. Here is what sometimes happens to a soul that experiences **anxious longings, tears, sighs and great impulses**. They all seem to proceed ... but they are nothing compared to what I am going to now explain; they resemble a **smoking fire** but can be **endured**.

While this soul is going about, **burning up** within itself, a **blow is felt** ... It comes often through a **sudden thought** or **word** about **death's delay**. Or the **soul will feel pierced by a fiery arrow**. I don't say that there is an

arrow ... but the soul realizes that the feeling couldn't come about **naturally**. Neither is the experience that of a **blow**... but it causes a **sharp wound**.

In my opinion, it isn't felt where **earthly sufferings** are felt, but rather in the very **deep and intimate part of the soul**, where this sudden **flash of lightening** reduces to **dust** everything it finds in this **earthly nature** of ours.

While this experience lasts nothing can be remembered about our being. In an instant the experience so binds the faculties that they have no freedom for anything **except** those things that will make this **pain increase**.

3. ... I see my words fall short because the experience is unexplainable. It is an **enrapturing** of the **faculties** and **senses away from** everything that is not a help... to feeling this **affliction**.

The intellect is very alive to understanding the reason why the soul feels far from God; His Majesty helps with a vivid knowledge of Himself in a way that causes the **pain to increase** to the point of making the soul **cry aloud**.

... This **feeling** is not in the **body** ... but in the **interior part of the soul** ... the **feelings** of the soul are more **severe** than those of the body... Such must be the nature of the sufferings of souls in **purgatory**. The fact that they have no body doesn't keep them from suffering more than through all the bodily sufferings they endured here on earth.

4. ... In this condition ... there is a great **danger of death**. Though the experience lasts but a **short while**, it leaves the body **disjointed** and the **heart beat** is as slow as a person about to render his soul to God. Natural body heat fails and the fire so burns the soul ...

Three or four days afterward one feels great sufferings and doesn't even have the strength to write ... The body seems to be left weaker. The reason one doesn't feel the pain is that the interior feeling of the soul is so much greater that one pays no attention to

the body ... With the presence of this spiritual pain, it doesn't seem that physical pain would be felt ... even if the body were cut in pieces.

5. ... The **reasoning faculty** is in such condition that the soul is not the master of it, nor can the soul think of anything else than of why it is grieving; of how it is absent from its Good and, of why it should want to live. It feels a **strange solitude** because no creature in all the earth provides it company ... everything torments it.

The soul sees that it is like a person hanging who cannot support himself on any earthly thing; nor can it ascend to heaven. On fire with this thirst, it cannot get to water; ... and already at such a point that nothing will take it away, nor does the soul want the thirst to be taken away save by the water of which our Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman.

6. ... How You afflict Your lovers Lord! All is small in comparison with what you give them afterwards ... If the **suffering** is to **purify the soul** so that it might enter the seventh dwelling place --- as those who will enter heaven must be cleansed in purgatory; it is as small as a drop of water in the sea. In spite of all this torment and affliction, not surpassed by any earthly afflictions, ... the soul feels that the pain is **precious**; so precious --- it understands well --- that one could not deserve it. ...

With this knowledge, the soul suffers the pain very willingly and would suffer it all its life, if God were to be served by it ... for truly the sufferings is no less than death.

7. ... The **torments of the soul** are so much more severe than those of the body, and the torment the souls in hell suffer is incomparably greater than the suffering mentioned here, and must, it is seen, last forever and ever... It would be impossible to explain how keenly felt is the **suffering of the soul**, and how different it is from that of the body ... The Lord Himself desires that we understand this so that we may know the extraordinary **debt** we owe Him for bringing

us to a state in which through His mercy we hope He will **free us and pardon our sins**.

8. Well, to return to what we were dealing with—for we left this **soul** with much **pain**—this pain lasts only a short while in such intensity. At the most it will last three or four hours ...

It has happened that the experience lasted no more than a quarter of an hour but left the **soul in pieces**... This happened ... during Easter week ... she had spent all of Easter in so much **dryness** she almost didn't know it was Easter. In no way can the soul **resist**... nor can this feeling be concealed from others ... but they provide some company, as though they were **shadows**; and so like shadows do all earthly things appear to that person.

9. ... It happens at times that while in that state ... the **soul dies** with the **desire to die**. For the **fire afflicts** so much that seemingly hardly anything keeps the soul from **leaving the body**.

The soul truly fears ... and would want the pain to abate ... but **no remedy** can be found to remove this pain until the Lord Himself takes it away, usually by means of a **great rapture**, or with some **vision**, where the true **Comforter consoles** and **strengthens** the soul that it might desire to **live** as long as God wills.

10. This is a **painful experience**, but the soul is left with the most **beneficial effects**, and the **fear of trials** is **lost**.

The **benefits** are such that one would be **pleased to suffer** the pain often ... but the soul must wait until the Lord desires to give this favor; just as there is no way to resist it or remove it when it comes.

The soul is left with greater **contempt** for the world than before ... It is much more **detached** from creatures because it now sees that only the Creator can **console and satisfy** it. It has greater fear of offending Him, taking more care not to do so, because it seems that He can also **torment** as well as **console**.

11. Two experiences, it seems to me, which lie on this **spiritual path** put a person in **danger of death**. **One** is this pain ...; the **other** is overwhelming **joy** and **delight**, which reaches so extraordinary a **peak** that the soul, I think, **swoons** to the point that it is hardly kept from **leaving the body** ... Courage is necessary ... *are you able to drink this chalice?*

12. I believe all of us, Sisters, will answer yes; and rightly so, for His Majesty gives strength to the one He sees has need of it. He defends these souls in all things ... And in the very end, before they die, He will **pay for everything at once**, as you will now see. May He be blessed forever, and may all creatures praise Him, amen.