

The Sixth Dwelling Places

Chapter 7 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Discusses the kind of suffering those souls to whom God grants the favors mentioned feel concerning their sins. Tells what a great mistake it is, however spiritual one may be, not to practice keeping the humanity of our

Lord and Savior Jesus Christ present in one's mind; also His most sacred Passion and life, His glorious Mother, and the saints, This chapter is very helpful.

You might think, Sisters, that these souls to whom the Lord communicates Himself in this unusual way will be so sure of enjoying Him forever that they will have **nothing to fear** or **sins to weep over** ... To think this would be a great mistake because suffering over one's sins increases the more one receives from God ... and until we are where nothing can cause pain this **suffering** will not be taken away.

2. ... The soul doesn't think about the suffering it will undergo on account of its sins but of how **ungrateful** it has been to One to whom it owes so much and who deserves so much to be served. For in these grandeurs God communicates to it, the soul understands much more about Him ... and it weeps over its **lack of respect** ... The **favors** it has received are like the waves of a large river ... they **come and go**; but the **memory** these souls have of their **sins** **clings** like **thick mire** ... and this is a **heavy cross**.

3. ... As for **fear of hell**, such persons don't have any. That they might lose God, at times – though seldom – distresses them very much. All their fear is that God might allow them **out of His hand** to **offend** Him ... In regard to their own **suffering** or **glory**, they don't care. If they don't want to stay long in **purgatory**, the reason comes for the fact of their **not wanting to be away from God** – as are those who are in purgatory—

rather than from the sufferings undergone there.

4. ... It is not safe for a soul ... to forget its past miserable state. Although recalling this misery is a painful thing, doing so is helpful for many ... As long as we live in this mortal body there will always be failures. No relief comes either by recalling that our Lord has already pardoned and forgotten the sins. Rather, it adds to the suffering to ... realize that favors are granted to one who deserves nothing but hell. I think such a realization was a great martyrdom for St. Peter and the Magdalene. Their love for God had grown so deep and they had received so many favors ... that the remembrance of their misery would have been difficult to suffer...

5. It may seem that anyone who enjoys such **lofty things** will no longer meditate on the mysteries of the most **sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ**. Such a person would now be engaged entirely in loving ... and that when souls have passed beyond the beginning stages it is better they deal with things concerning the **divinity** and **flee from corporeal things**. Nonetheless, they will not make me admit such a road is a good one ... The devil has already tried to deceive me in this matter, thus I have learned my lesson from **experience**. Let me caution you to proceed very carefully in this matter ...

6. It will also seem to some souls that they cannot think about the Passion or still less about the Blessed Virgin and the lives of the saints ... I cannot imagine what such souls are thinking of. To be always **withdrawn from corporeal things** and **enkindled in love** is the trait of **angelic spirits** not of those who live in **mortal bodies** ... It is necessary **not** to withdraw through one's own efforts from all our **good** and **help** which is the **most sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ** ...

Those that do withdraw themselves will do **harm** to **themselves** and **others** and will **not** enter these **last two dwelling places**. For if they lose the guide, who is the good Jesus,

they will not hit upon the right road ... The Lord Himself says that He is the **way**; the **light** and that **no one can go to the Father but through Him**, and “anyone who sees me sees my Father.” (Jn. 14:9)

7. There are some souls ... who brought by our Lord to **perfect contemplation** would like to be in that prayer always, but that is **impossible**.

Yet this favor remains with them afterward they **cannot engage** as before in **discursive thought** about the mysteries of the **Passion** and the **life of Christ**.

I don't know the reason, but this inability is very common. The **intellect** becomes less capable of **meditation**. Perhaps the reason is that since in meditation the whole effort consists in **seeking God** and once **God is found** the soul becomes used to seeking Him again, through the **work of the will**.

The soul doesn't want to **tire itself** by working with the **intellect**.

Since this generous faculty, the **will**, is already **enkindled**, it wants to **avoid** using the intellect ... But ... this is impossible, especially before the soul reaches the last two dwelling places, because the **will** often needs the **help of the intellect** to become **enkindled**.

8. ... The soul wants to be completely occupied in love ... but to be so occupied is impossible ... Though the **will** is not dead, the fire that usually makes it burn is dying out, and someone must blow on the fire so that heat will be given off. Would it be good for a soul with this dryness to wait for fire from heaven to burn this sacrifice it is making of itself ... No, nor is it right to expect miracles ... His Majesty wants us to consider ourselves undeserving of them because of our wretchedness, and desires that we help ourselves in every way possible ...

9. Anyone the Lord places in the seventh dwelling place rarely needs to make this effort ... Such a person walks continually in an admirable way with Christ, our Lord, in

whom divine and human joined and who is always that person's companion.

As for the above, when the fire in the will (above) is not enkindled and God's presence is not felt, we must seek His presence ...

At the beginning of the life of prayer it may be that the Lord will not give this **fire** in a year or even in many years ...

Since we know the path by which we must please God, that of the commandments and counsels, we should follow it very diligently, and think of His **life** and **death** and of the many things **we owe Him**; let the rest come when the Lord desires.

10. ... Someone may respond that he cannot dwell on these things ... perhaps he will in a certain way be right. You already know that **discursive thinking** with the **intellect** is one thing and **representing truths** to the **intellect** by means of the **memory** is another.

By **meditation** I mean much **discursive reflection** with the **intellect** in the following way: we begin to think about the favor God granted us in giving us His only Son, and **we do not stop there**, but go on to the mysteries of His whole glorious life; or we begin to think about the prayer in the garden, but the intellect doesn't stop until He is on the cross ... this kind of reflection is an **admirable** and **very meritorious prayer**.

11. This prayer, **discursive reflection**, is the kind that those whom God has brought to **supernatural things** and to **perfect contemplation** are right in saying they cannot practice.

But I say that a person will not be right if he does not dwell on these mysteries ... especially when the Catholic Church celebrates them.

Nor is it possible for the soul to forget that it has received so much from God, so many precious signs of love, living sparks that will enkindle it more in this love for our Lord.

But I say this person doesn't understand himself, because the **soul** understands these mysteries in a more **perfect manner**.

The **intellect** represents them in such a way, and they are so **stamped on the memory**, that the mere sight of the Lord fallen to the ground in the garden ... is enough to last the intellect not only an hour but many days ...

Soon the will responds ... with the **desire to serve** somehow for such a great favor and to suffer something for One who suffered so much...

I believe that for this reason a person cannot go on to further **discursive reflection** on the Passion, and this inability makes him think that he cannot think about it.

12. If he doesn't dwell on these mysteries ... it is good that he strive to do so ... for doing so will **not** impede **sublime prayer**.

... If the Lord **suspends the intellect**, well and good; ...it is a very great help toward every good; the hindrance would come from a great deal of work with the **discursive reflection** ... one who has advanced further along cannot practice this discursive reflection.

It could be that one can, for God leads souls by many paths. But let not those who can travel by the **road of discursive thought condemn** those who cannot or **judge** them incapable of enjoying the sublime blessing that lie enclosed in the mysteries of our good, Jesus Christ. Nor will anyone make me thinkthat he will advance by turning away from these mysteries.

13. There are principles certain souls use, by which it is thought that when a person begins to experience the **prayer of quiet** ... and **spiritual delights** given by the Lord, that it is important to remain always in that **state of delight** ...

Life is long and there are many **trials**. We need to look at Christ as our **model** ... so to **bear these trials** with **perfection**. Jesus is too good a companion to turn away from Him and His most blessed Mother...

Enjoyment in prayer is not so habitual that there is not time for everything. I would be suspicious of anyone who says this delight is continual ... and if this absorption continues, it is extremely dangerous at least for the brain and the head.

14. ... It is fitting for souls, however spiritual, to take care not to **flee from corporal things** to the point of thinking that even the most sacred humanity causes **harm**. Some quote what the Lord said to his disciples that it was fitting that He go. I can't bear this. I would wager that He didn't say this to His most Blessed Mother who was firm in faith; ... and she loved Him... with such perfection that His presence was a help rather than a hindrance. The apostles must not have been as firm then in the faith as they were afterward ... I tell you, daughters, I consider this a **dangerous path** and think the devil could make one **lose devotion** for the most **Blessed Sacrament**.

15. The **mistake** I was making consisted of **not** delighting so much in the thought of our Lord Jesus Christ **but** in going along in that absorption, waiting for the enjoyment ... Since it wasn't possible for me to always experience the absorption, the mind wandered here and there. My soul ... was losing a lot of time and **not** making **progress in virtue** or **improving in prayer**. I didn't understand the reason ... until a servant of God warned me ... I then saw clearly how wrong I had been ... I could only gain through Him from whom all blessings come to us. May He be always praised, amen.