

The Seventh Dwelling Places

Chapter 1 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Treats of the great favors God grants souls that have entered the seventh dwelling places. Tells how in her opinion there is a certain difference between the soul and the spirit, although the soul is all one. This chapter contains noteworthy doctrine.

... Since so much has been said about this **spiritual path** it will be impossible for anything more to be said. Such a thought would be very **foolish**. Since the greatness of God is without limits, His works are too. Who will finish telling of His mercies and grandeurs? ...

He grants us a great favor in having communicated these things to a person through whom we can know about them. Thus, the more we know about His communication to creatures the more we will praise His grandeur and make the effort to have esteem for souls in which the Lord delights so much.

Each one has a soul, but since we do not **prize souls** as is deserved by creatures made in the image of God we do not understand the **deep secrets** that lie in them.

... God reveals many things to the one whom He places in this dwelling place ... Let me make known His mercies that His name may be more praised and glorified.

2. ... It is important for you not to impede your Spouse's celebration of this spiritual marriage with your souls, since this marriage brings so many **blessings**...

3. When our Lord is pleased to have pity on this soul that He has already taken spiritually as His Spouse because of what it suffers and has suffered through its desires, **He brings it**, before the spiritual marriage is consummated, into His dwelling place which is the seventh. For just as in heaven so in the soul His Majesty must have a room

where He dwells alone. Let us call it **another heaven**.

It's very important, Sisters, not to think the soul is something dark ... As for the soul that is not in grace, I confess this is so, but not through any fault of the Sun of Justice who **dwells within it** giving it **being** but because such a soul is incapable of receiving the light... It is as though it were in a **dark prison**, bound hands and feet ... and **blind and deaf** ... Reflect that at one time we were ourselves in this condition and that the Lord can also have mercy on them.

4. Let us take special care, Sisters, to beg this mercy of Him ... it is a most generous **alms to pray** for those in **mortal sin**.

Suppose we were to see a Christian with his hands fastened behind his back by a strong chain, bound to a post, and dying of hunger, not because of lack of food, for there are very choice dishes beside him, but because he cannot take hold of the food and eat ... suppose he sees that he is about to breathe his last and die, not just an earthly but an eternal death. Wouldn't it be a terrible cruelty to stand looking at him and not feed him? Well, then, what if through your prayer the chains could be loosed? ... For the love of God, I ask you always to **remember in your prayer souls in mortal sin**.

5. We are speaking now though about those who by God's mercy, have done penance for their sins and are in a **state of grace** ... We are talking about an **interior world** where there is room for so many ... dwelling places ... It is right that the soul be like this since within it there is a **dwelling place for God**.

When His Majesty is pleased to grant the soul this **divine marriage**... **He first brings it into His own dwelling place**. He desires that the favor be different from what it was when He gave the soul **raptures**. I really believe that in rapture and the prayer of union He unites it with Himself. It is then called to the **superior part** but not to enter its **center** as in this dwelling place ...

The Lord joins the soul to Himself. He does so by making it **blind and deaf**... and taking away **perception** of the nature and kind of favor enjoyed. The great delight the soul then feels is to see itself near God. Yet when He joins the soul to Himself, it understands nothing; all the **faculties are lost**.

6. In this seventh dwelling place the **union** comes about in a **different way**: God now desires to **remove the scales** from the soul's eyes to let it understand... something of the favor He grants it.

When the soul is brought into that dwelling place, the **Most Blessed Trinity**, all three Persons, through an **intellectual vision**, is revealed to it...

First there comes an **enkindling** in the **spirit**... The Persons are distinct... The soul understands ... that **all three Persons** are one **substance** and one **power** and one **knowledge** and one **God** alone. It knows in such a way that what we hold by **faith**, it understands ...

Here **all three persons communicate** themselves to it, speak to it and explain those words of the Lord in the Gospel: **that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves Him and keeps His commandments**.

7. ... Each day the soul is more amazed, for these Persons never seem to leave it any more ... but it realizes that they are within. In the **extreme interior**, in some place very **deep within itself** ... it perceives this **divine company**.

8. You may think ... the soul... will be unable to be occupied with anything else. On the contrary, the soul is much more occupied than before with everything pertaining to the **service of God**; and once its duties are over it remains with that enjoyable company.

If the soul does not fail God, He will never fail to make His presence clearly known to it. It has confidence that since God has granted this favor He will not allow it to lose

the favor. It also is more careful not to displease Him in anything.

9. ... This presence is not felt so fully... as when revealed the **first time** or at other times when God grants the soul this gift or the soul would find it **impossible** to be engaged in anything else or even to live among people.

Though not perceived with this **clear light**, the soul finds itself in this company every time it takes notice.

The experience resembles that of a person who after being in a bright room with others finds himself, once the shutters closed, in **darkness**. The light is taken away but he doesn't stop **knowing** the others are there. To see them though when the light returns doesn't lie in his powers, but only when our Lord desires that the **window of the intellect** be opened ...

10. It seems the divine Majesty desires to prepare the soul for more. Clearly the soul will be truly helped in every way to advance in perfection and to lose the fear of the other favors He granted it ...

... In everything she found herself **improved**, ... and despite the trials and the business affairs she had to attend to, the **essential part** of her soul **never moved** from that room.

It seemed to her that in a certain way there was a **division** in her soul. Suffering some great trial a little after God granted her this favor, she complained of that part of the soul, as Martha complained of Mary, and sometimes pointed out that it was there always enjoying that quietude at its own pleasure while leaving her in the midst of so many trials and occupations that she could not keep it company.

11. This will seem to you daughters, to be **foolishness**, but it truly happens this way... Interior things are seen in such a way that one understands with **certitude** that there is some kind of clearly recognized difference between the **soul** and the **spirit**, even though they are both one. So delicate a division is perceived that sometimes it seems that one

functions differently from the other, and so does the **savor** the Lord desires to give them seem different.

It also seems to me that the **soul** and the **faculties** are not one but different. There are so many such **delicate things** in the interior that it would be boldness on my part to set out to explain them. In heaven we will see all this, if the Lord in His mercy grants us the favor of bringing us there where we shall understand these secrets. Amen