

The Seventh Dwelling Places

Chapter 4 (summary)

Interior Castle

Saint Teresa of Avila

Concludes by explaining what she thinks our Lord's purpose is in granting such great favors to the soul and how it is necessary that Martha and Mary join together. This chapter is very beneficial.

You must not think, Sisters, that the **effects** ... are **always present** in these souls. Sometimes our Lord leaves these individuals in their **natural state**, then it seems all the poisonous creatures ... of this castle band together to **take revenge** for the time they were unable to have these souls under their control.

2. This **natural state** lasts only a **short while**, a day or a little more. In this **disturbance** ... the **soul's gain** through the **good company** it is in becomes **manifest**. The Lord gives the soul **stability** and good **resolutions** not to deviate from His **service** ... This **disturbance** is rare, but our Lord does not want the soul to forget its being, so that, ... it might always be **humble** ... and better **understand** the great favor it received, what it **owes** His Majesty, and that it might **praise** Him.

3/ Nor should you think that since these souls have **strong determination** ... not to commit any **imperfections** ... That they fail to **commit imperfections** and even **venial sins** ... for from what these souls understand they are **free from mortal sins**, though **not immune**.

That they might have sins they are **unaware** of is a **torment** to them as is seeing **souls go astray**. Even though they have hope that they will not be among these souls, they cannot help **fear** when they recall persons in Scripture ... like Solomon ...

The one among you who feels **safest should fear more** for *blessed is the man who fears the Lord*, says David.

May His Majesty protect us always. To beseech Him that we not offend Him is the **greatest security** we can have. May He be praised forever, amen.

4. It will be good, Sisters, to tell you the **reason** the Lord grants so many **favors** in this world ... I want to tell you again lest you think the reason is solely to give these souls delight ...

His Majesty could not grant us a greater favor than to give us a life that would be an **imitation** of His beloved Son's life. Thus, I hold for certain that these favors are meant to **fortify our weakness** ... that we might be able to **imitate Him** in His great **sufferings**.
5. ... Those who were closest to Christ were those with the greatest trials. Let us look at what His Mother and the apostles suffered. Through St. Paul we can see the **effects** **visions** and **contemplation** produce when from our Lord, and not from the imagination or the devil's deceit.

Did St. Paul hide himself in these delights ...? No, He did not have a day's rest.

6. O my Sisters! How **forgetful** this soul in which the Lord dwells in so **particular** a way, should be of its own **rest**, of its **honor** and of wanting **esteem** in anything! If it is with Him, as is right, it should think little about itself. All its concern is to **please** Him more and how or where it will show Him the **love** it bears Him.

This is the reason for prayer, my daughters, the purpose of spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works.

7. This is the **true sign** of a **favor** being **from God**. It benefits me little to be alone making acts of devotion to our Lord, ... promising to do wonders in His service ... The **benefit** is much **greater** when our **deeds conform** with what we say in prayer ...

Let the soul **bend its will** if it wishes that **prayer be beneficial** to it, for in these little

monasteries there will be many occasions for you to do so.

8. ... Fix your eyes on the Crucified and all will become small for you. If His Majesty showed us His **love** by **works** and frightful **torments**, how is it you want to please Him only with words?

Do you know what it means to be truly **spiritual**? It means becoming **slaves of God; marked by His brand**, which is the **cross**. Spiritual persons, because they have given Him their **liberty**, can be sold by Him as the **slaves of everyone**, as He was.

If souls are not **determined** about becoming his **slaves**, let them be convinced that they are not making much progress.

This whole building has **humility** as its foundation. If humility is not genuinely present, the Lord will not construct a high building lest it fall to the ground.

Thus, Sisters, that you might build on good foundations, **strive to be the least** and the **slaves of all**. Look at how and where you can **please** and **serve** them.

What you do in this matter you do more for yourself than for them and lay stones so firmly that the **castle** will not fall.

9. ... It is necessary that your foundation consist of more than prayer and contemplation. If you do not strive for the **virtues** and practice them, you will always be **dwarfs** ... Whoever does not increase decreases. **Love**, where present, cannot possibly be **content** with remaining always the **same**.

10. It will seem that I am speaking of beginners and that after this stage souls can **rest**. The **calm** these souls have **interiorly** is because they have much less calm or desire to have calm exteriorly.

The **faculties**, **senses** and **body** will not be idle. The soul wages more **war** from the **center** than when it was outside suffering with them. For at the time it did not understand the great **gain trials** bring...

The company it has gives it much greater strength ... Being united with the Strong One in a **union of spirit** with **spirit**, allows

fortitude to cling to such a soul. And so we will understand what fortitude the saints had for suffering and dying.

11. With all that fortitude, the soul helps all those in the castle ... It is fortified by the strength it has from **drinking wine in this wine cellar**, where its Spouse has brought it and doesn't allow it to leave ...

Thus, the soul has its share of misfortune while it lives. Its interior strength continues to increase as does the war being waged. All seems like a trifle to it.

The great **penances** that many saints performed must have come from this center ... Though these saints were forgetful of themselves, their suffering must have been great.

12. Let us desire and be occupied in prayer ... to have this **strength to serve**. Let's refuse to take an unfamiliar path, one other than the one He... and all His saints took, ... May the thought never enter our minds. Believe me, Martha and Mary **must join** together to show hospitality to the Lord, have Him always present and not host Him badly by failing to give Him something to eat.

How would Mary, seated at His feet, provide him **food** if her sister did not help her? His food is that in every way possible we **draw souls** that they may be **saved** and **praise** Him always.

13. ... Jesus did say, however, that Mary had chosen the better part. But, she had already performed the task of Martha, pleasing the Lord by **washing His feet** and **drying them** with her **hair**...

The people saw a woman like Mary change so much ... She wanted to become a saint since obviously she would have changed her manner of dress and all else ...

I tell you, Sisters, the **better part** came after **many trials** that she **suffered** after the death of the Lord. The years that she subsequently lived in His absence must have been a terrible **torment**. You see she wasn't always in the **delight of contemplation** at the **feet** of the Lord.

14. You may also point out that you are unable to bring souls to God ...

Sometimes the devil gives us great desires to avoid serving our Lord in **possible things** ... Apart from the fact that by **prayer** you will be helping greatly, you need not be desiring to benefit the whole world but **focus** on those in your **company** ...

This fire of love in you enkindles their souls, and with every other virtue you will be always awakening them. Such service will be very great and pleasing to the Lord. By what you do in deed ... His Majesty will understand that you would do much more. Thus, He will give you the reward He would if you had gained many souls for Him.

15. You will say that such **service** does not convert souls... Who has appointed you **judge** in this matter? ...

In sum, my Sisters, ... we shouldn't build castles in the air. The Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our works as at the **love** with which they are done.

If we do what we can, His Majesty will enable us each day to do more and more, provided we do not quickly tire.

But during the little while this life lasts, ... let us offer the Lord **interiorly** and **exteriorly** the **sacrifices** we can. His Majesty will join it with that which He offered on the cross to the Father for us.

Thus even though our **works** are **small** they will have the **value** of our **love** for Him would have **merited** had they been **great**.

16. May it please His Majesty, my Sisters and daughters, that we all reach that place where we may ever **praise** Him.

Through the merits of His Son who lives and reigns forever and ever, may He give me the grace to carry out something of what I tell you, amen.

For I tell you that my confusion is great, and thus I ask you through the same Lord that in your prayers you do not forget this **poor wretch**. Amen