

The Way of Perfection

Part 4: Prayer in General

Chapter 23 Do Not Turn Back

(summary)

Saint Teresa of Avila

Chapter 23 Treats of how important it is for one who has begun the path of prayer not to turn back and speaks once more of the great value that lies in beginning with determination.

There are many reasons why it is extremely important to **begin with great determination**: One is that if we resolve to give something ...there is no reason for failing to **give with complete determination**. There is no reason to be like the lender who gives something with the intention of getting it back again ... There is always some displeasure felt by the borrower when the object is taken back.

2. What bride is there who in receiving many **jewels** from her bridegroom will refuse to give him even a **ring**... as a pledge that she will be his until death? Does the Lord deserve less, that we should **mock** Him by giving and then taking back the trifle we gave Him? But this little bit of **time** that we **resolve** to give Him ... let us give it to Him ... with our thoughts free of other things ... Let us be **determined** never to take time back from Him because of **trials** ... or **dryness**. I should consider the **time of prayer** as not belonging to me and think that He can ask it of me in justice when I do not want to give it to Him completely.

3. Let us be **wholly determined** never to take it (**time**) back from Him. My God is not touchy; He doesn't bother about trifling things ... As for the stingy, who don't have the spirit of giving, it is enough for them to lend ... for this Lord takes everything into account: He adjusts Himself to our way of giving ... He is not at all petty, but generous ... He finds it easy to pardon ... Just the raising of our eyes in remembrance of Him will have its **reward**.

4. Another reason to begin with determination is that the devil will not then have so free a hand to tempt. He is afraid of determined souls because they can do him great harm ... If he sees carelessness, he will do great harm. If he knows that someone is

unstable in being good and not strongly determined to **persevere**, he will pursue him and cause obstacles. My experience has shown me that no one knows how important **determination** is.

5. The **other reason** to begin with **determination** is that the person who does so struggles more courageously. He knows that come what may, he will not turn back. As with one in battle ... he struggles with greater determination and wants to **fight like a desperado**. ... He is convinced of how important victory is. For him, **to conquer is to live** ... If we don't let ourselves be conquered, we will obtain our **goal**...

Don't be afraid that the Lord will leave you to die of thirst, for He calls us to **drink** from this **fount** ... It is a great thing to have experienced the **friendship and favor He shows toward those who journey on this road** and how He takes care of almost all the **expenses**.

6. Those who have not experienced the Lord's goodness want the assurance of some personal gain. Even in this life there is the hundredfold and the Lord says, "Ask, and you will receive."

Should anyone doubt, little would be lost in trying the journey of prayer. This journey brings with it the following **good: more is given than is asked for**, beyond what we could desire. This is absolutely true; I know...

Amen