

## The Way of Perfection

### Part 4: Prayer in General

Chapter 25 Vocal Prayer, Mental Prayer & Contemplation

(summary)

Saint Teresa of Avila

**Chapter 25** Tells how much the soul gains through a perfect recitation of vocal prayer and how God happens to raise it from this prayer to supernatural things.

To keep you from thinking that little is gained from the **perfect recitation** of **vocal prayer**, I tell you that it is very possible that while you are reciting the Our Father ... the **Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation**.

By this means His Majesty shows that He listens to the one who speaks to Him.

It is His **grandeur** that **speaks** to the soul, **suspends** one's intellect, **binds** one's imagination and **takes** the words from one's mouth; for even though the soul may want to speak, it has great difficulty doing so.

**2.** The soul understands, without the noise of words, that this divine Master is **teaching** it by **suspending** its **faculties**. If they were to be at work they would only do **harm** rather than bring **benefit**. They are enjoying without understanding how they are enjoying.

The **soul** is being **enkindled in love** and it does not understand how it **loves**. It knows it enjoys what it loves but it does not understand how. It knows that this joy cannot be obtained by the **intellect** simply by desiring it. The **will** is enkindled without understanding how.

But as soon as it can understand something, it sees that this **good** cannot be **merited** or **gained** through all the trials one can suffer on earth. This good is a **gift** from the Lord of heaven and earth ... What I have described is **perfect contemplation**.

**3.** Now you will understand the **difference** between **perfect contemplation** and **mental prayer**.

**Mental prayer** consists of :

Being aware and knowing that we are speaking, with whom we are speaking, and who we ourselves are who dare to speak with so great a Lord.

To think about **this** and **similar things**, of how little we have served Him and how much we are obliged to serve Him, is **mental prayer**. Don't think it amounts to some other kind of gibberish, and don't let the name frighten you.

To recite the Our Father or the Hail Mary or whatever you wish is **vocal prayer**. But behold what poor music you produce when you do this without **mental prayer**. Even the words will be poorly pronounced at times. In these **two kinds** of **prayer** we can do something ourselves, with the help of God. In **contemplation**, we can do nothing; His Majesty is the one who does everything, for it is His work and about our nature.

**4.** ... To those of you who have been brought to **contemplation**, you many find in the account of my life some **advice** and **counsel** ... that will be very **consoling** and **beneficial** to you ...

Strive after what is contained in this present book and leave the rest to God; for it is He who must bestow **supernatural prayer**, and He will **grant** it to you if you do not **stop short** on the road but **try hard** until you **reach the end**. Amen