

## The Way of Perfection

### Part 5: Our Father

Temptations & Two Remedies

Chapter 39 (summary)

Saint Teresa of Avila

**Chapter 39** Continues the same subject, gives advice about some different kinds of temptations, and sets down two remedies by which to free oneself from them.

Be on guard, daughters, against types of **humility** given by the **devil** in which great **disquiet** is felt about the **gravity** of our **sins**. One way it can afflict is causing us to give up **receiving Communion** and **practicing private prayer**. They are given up because the devil makes one feel unworthy. Instead of receiving favors, time is now spent wondering if they are well-prepared. The situation can get so bad the soul thinks God has abandoned it. It almost doubts His mercy ... It feels such distrust of itself that it **folds its arms** and **remains idle**; what is good in others seems evil in itself.

**2.** Sometimes it is through **humility** and **virtue** that you see your wretchedness, while at other times it will be a **gross temptation**. **Humility** does not disturb, disquiet or agitate; it comes with **peace**, **delight**, and **calm**. A person, upon seeing how wretched he is, understands that he merits hell ... if the **humility** is **genuine**, it comes with a **sweetness** and **satisfaction**. The pain of genuine humility doesn't agitate the soul; it expands it and enables the soul to serve God more.

The other type of pain disturbs everything, afflicts the entire soul, and is very painful. The **devil's aim** is to make us think we are **humble** and, in turn, if possible, make us lose confidence in God.

**3.** When you find yourselves in this condition, stop thinking about your misery, turn your thoughts to the mercy of God, to how He loves and suffered for us. If you are undergoing a temptation, you will not even be able to do this. The devil will not let you quiet your mind ... It will be enough if you recognize that this is a **temptation**.

He also tempts us in regard to **excessive penances** and how we do more than others. If when told to stop you do not do so, you are clearly undergoing a temptation. Strive to obey, even if this is more painful for you, since the **greatest perfection lies in obedience**.

**4.** Another dangerous temptation is **self-assurance** that we will not **return** to our past **faults** and worldly **pleasures**: "for now I have understood the world and know that all things come to an end and that the things of God give me greater delight."

If self-assurance is present in **beginners**, it is very dangerous ... the person doesn't take care against entering into the **occasions of sin**, and **he falls flat** ... Since the devil sees that he is dealing with a soul that can do him harm and profit others, he deploys all his powers... Never stop fearing lest you fall again; be on guard against the occasions of sin.

**5.** Strive, without hiding anything, to discuss these **favors** and **consolations** with someone who will enlighten you. **However sublime the contemplation, let your prayer always begin and end with self-knowledge**.

If the favor is from God ... you will most of the time follow the advice because **God's favor** brings **humility** and always leaves greater **light** that we may understand... Nothing more that I say on this subject will give us complete security.

**6.** Eternal Father, all we can do is turn to you and pray that these **enemies not lead us into temptation**. Let public enemies come, for by Your favor we will be more easily freed. But these **other treacheries** ... we always need to pray to You for a **remedy**. Instruct us, Lord, so that we may **understand ourselves** and be **secure**. Few take this path; but to travel it with so many fears, fewer will take it.

**7.** What a strange thing! **It's as though the devil tempts only those who take the path of prayer**. Everyone is more surprised by a mistake of one of those who is nearing perfection than by the public mistakes and sins of a hundred thousand others ...

As a matter of fact, people are right in being surprised, for among those who recite the Our Father, there are very few deceived by the devil, so their mistakes cause surprise.

It is something very common among mortals, they pass over easily what they often see, and wonder at what seldom or almost never happens. The devil causes them to be surprised which is to his advantage. He loses many through one who reaches **perfection**... Souls who practice prayer walk so much more **securely** than those who take another road. They are like those in the stands watching the bull in comparison with one who is right in front of its horns... Some souls profit by one path, and others by another. **Prayer is a safe road**; you will be more quickly freed from temptation when close to the Lord than when far. Beseech Him and ask Him to deliver you from evil as you do so often each day in the Our Father.        AMEN