

Theresa of Ávila

Excerpt from the *Interior Castle*

We must be resolute

That is why it is very important for us to associate with others who are walking in the right way- nor only those who are where we are in the journey, but also those who have gone farther. Those who have drawn close to God have the ability to bring us closer to him, for in a sense they take us with them.

Let us, therefore, firmly resolve not to lose the battle we fight. For if the devil sees that we are willing to lose our life and our peace and that nothing can entice us back to our former way of life, he will soon cease from troubling us. But we must be resolute, for we fight with devils and thus there is no better weapon than the cross.

Do not lose heart

If we go astray and want the Lord to do our will and lead us as our desires dictate, how can we be building on a firm foundation? I must remind you that it is the Lord's will that we should be tested and that even allows evil vipers to bite us. When we are afflicted with evil thoughts or when we enter a spiritual desert that we cannot find our way out of, God is teaching us how to be on our guard in the future and to see if we really are grieved at having offended Him.

If then, you sometimes fall, do not lose heart. God will bring good out of your fall if you strive to follow Him. Sometimes God allows us to fall in order to reveal to us our sinfulness and to show us what harm comes as a result of sin. Our sins can have the effect of leading us back to God and striving all the more.

Gently begin a time of prayer

Let us therefore, place our trust in God and not in ourselves, relying heavily on His mercy and not fighting the battle alone. When you feel the fight with sin coming, gently begin a time of prayer and recollection. At first it will be difficult, but after a while you will be able to do it easily, and for long periods of time.

Do not think that you must stop doing your work in order to pray. The Lord will turn all of our work time into profit as long as we continue in a spirit of prayer. There is no remedy for the temptations that we face except to start at the beginning, and the beginning is prayer. The only way to lose is to turn back.

. . . For our works have no value unless they are united with faith, and our faith has no value unless it is united with works. May God grant us the ability to see how much we cost him, to see that the servant is not greater than the Master, to see that we must work if we would enjoy his glory. For this reason we must pray, lest we continually enter into temptation.

Communion with the Trinity

In this seventh dwelling place the union comes about in a different way: our good God now desires to remove the scales from the soul's eyes and let it see and understand, although in a strange way, something of the favour 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 through a certain representation of the truth. First there comes an enkindling in the spirit in the manner of a cloud of magnificent splendour; and these Persons are distinct, and through an admirable knowledge the soul understands as a most profound truth that all three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone.

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.

Use No Force

You will not be able to enter all the dwelling places through your own efforts, even though these efforts may seem to you great unless the Lord of the castle himself brings you there. Hence I advise you to use no force if you meet with any resistance.

Once you get used to enjoying this castle, you will find rest in all things, even those involving much labor, for you will have the hope of returning to the castle, which no one can take from you.