



February 23rd, [1845]

Chapter on the 3rd Sunday of Lent on the Good Use of the Passions of the Soul, trying to explain what St. John of the Cross says on the example and the words of Our Lord

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The need to speak to them, not only of the external accomplishment of the Law of God, but also of that which can make them accomplish it in the innermost intimacy of their being, since I should not only make of them exact observers of the Rule, but spouses, fervent spouses of Jesus Christ: "The beauty of the King's daughter is within." (Ps. 44 :14) that I see not the heart but that Jesus Christ dwells therein only and that it is my duty to help their desire to draw him therein by teaching them as best I can what must be done for that. That the external faults come from elsewhere, from the inmortification of the heart or of illusions made or that one was mistaking in what needed conversion in oneself. The danger of false notions regarding this, from which comes the trouble, the fatigue, the useless struggles, etc. We should also always base on the simplest notions the search for what is most perfect for the inner life.

One of the most important teachings for the interior life consists in the manner of calming the liveliest feelings, those that dominate our souls most, those by which we are ordinarily drawn, taking care not to use them but for God according to the example and the teaching of Our Lord. Therein is the whole secret of perfection according to one of the greatest Masters of the spiritual life whose doctrine I could explain very simply with the help of the Gospel.

In fact, our perfection consisting in all things in the use of all we are and all we have for God and according to Jesus Christ, we simply owe him much more when it is a matter of the most intimate, most frequent and most powerful sentiments on our heart. By what is our heart touched? What draws it so violently to some things and distance itself so strongly from others if not fear, desire, joy or pain? Who among us can escape from the influence of these sentiments? Let us see in what Jesus Christ has desired that we use them so that their power does not turn against his.

1st Making use of fear. Fear only God and what displeases him. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell." (Mt. 10:28) What power, what rising above all the fears of the earth ! What a shame for a spouse of Jesus Christ to fear so many little things when she does not allow herself to fear what is most horrendous on earth.

There are religious souls who fear a thousand stupidities, absence, the dead, the wind, etc. We all fear other non-beings, being blamed, displeasing the superior, upsetting a Sister, etc. (details). All these fears hinder us from seeking God alone and of doing what pleases him. Let us get rid of all these fears through the unique fear of displeasing God.

2nd Making use of desire. Desire only God, his love, the good of others and the fulfillment of justice. I find several desires of Our Lord in the Gospel. How different ours are! "There is a baptism I must still receive, and how great is my distress till it is over!" (Lk. 12 :50) "I have longed to eat this Passover with you." (Lk. 22:15) "May they be one as we are one." (Jn. 17:21)

We use our life on futile desires, the most fervent ardently desire to finish this task, to have a comfortable and well arranged house, to succeed in this, be healed of an illness, be released from a painful situation. We do not keep for God this strong desire that draws him so invincibly since he listens to the desires of the heart and "that the rest of our thoughts are a feast for him", that he sends an angel to Daniel because he is "a man of desires". (Dan. 3:23)

3rd Joy. To rejoice only in God. This is great perfection. Not to give oneself to any joy, no matter how small, not to rejoice in any other thing but his will, his love, his justice, his external glory, Himself and his perfections. "You know that your servant has found pleasure only in you." (Est. 14:18)

Who among us can say that? Detail of a thousand things on which we pour out our joy, an affectionate manner, a success, consolations in prayer, natural pleasure, etc. Ah! Let us say as in the Imitation: "beyond goods, friends, health, honor from creatures...rest in God, O my soul, because He is the eternal repose of the saints." With St. Francis of Sales: "As long as God is God, that his mercy is great, that his perfection is infinite, whether I live or die, does not matter to me."

Do not let this feeling of joy so delicate, so precious to our soul be poured out on what has no relation to God. The only joy of Jesus Christ is "to do the will of his Father..." It still is our salvation, the return of the prodigal son, the sheep that was found.

Ah! Keep for him the joy he has in seeing us all his, the joy of being with us. "My delights are to be with children of men." Let us be his joy, his crown by not having any other joy.

4th Pain. He who rejoices only in God suffers only for him and with him. God does not forbid legitimate pain. He cried for Lazarus. But let us cry as Christians by adoring God's will and not allowing ourselves to be weakened by the pain to the point that we can no longer accomplish this holy will in the most urgent duties. Do not mourn especially for a thousand trifles.

Let our sorrow be for our sins as Jesus Christ taught us by telling the daughters of Jerusalem to weep over them; as he himself wept over Jerusalem, by being sad over the infidelity of the young man who withdrew when he told him about the renunciation necessary to be his disciple. Let us keep our sadness, our compassion if we are fortunate to have any, for the suffering of Jesus Christ. Let us strengthen ourselves against the affection that we have for ourselves in order to keep them for him. Let us, for love of him, learn to love even the suffering, to go above pain. "So that the world to know that I love my Father."

To entrust these teachings, which are of great sensitivity in terms of perfection of their fidelity, since only with Jesus Christ they can see how they are failing interiorly, secretly. To tell them to make the same search after the example and spirit of Jesus Christ for all the other movements of their soul.