

A Course in Miracles:
A Hope-filled Spirituality

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Part VIII
"Entering God's Presence" (cont.)

Again, it is *one or the other*. Either I exist as a separated object, a separated thing, beginning as a separated thought in the mind and then later becoming a separated body, or there is God. *One or the other*. Since we believe we exist, that means there is no God, which of course is what the ego wants. If there is no God, how can we enter into His Presence? That of course is what we all want. We don't want to enter into God's Presence because in that Presence there is no individuality, no uniqueness, and no specialness. There is only "a Oneness joined as One." Being afraid of that, we are always choosing to be separated, and since the body is the embodiment of the thought of separation, we are always choosing to make our bodies real.

One of the best ways of making the body real is to attack others, to see ourselves as separate from other bodies. You have hurt me, you have abused me, you have ridiculed me, you have betrayed me, you have abandoned me, you have been unkind to me. There is a "you" that has been a victimizer, and there is an "I" that is the victim. Therefore there is separation, and therefore it is *one or the other*.

Seeing everything as the same is the correction for the ego's belief that we are all different. The principle of *one or the other* is saying we are different, beginning with the perception that God is different from His Son, the Son is different from His Father. That is carried through everything in this world where our bodies tell us we are different from other bodies. No two bodies are alike. Even identical twins end up not being perfectly alike. They will have different personalities, different likes and dislikes, and they will develop different symptoms. No one and nothing here is the same; we are all different. *One or the other*.

But on the level of the mind, which is where our true reality is, we are all the same, and it is on that level that we recognize the truth of the principle of *together, or not at all*. I cannot enter into God's Presence unless I do it *with* you. Not that I have to do it with you physically. You might have died 30 years ago, and I could still be holding a grievance against you. That is enough to keep me out of Heaven, which is what I want. That is the key idea that underlies everything in this course. We do not want to enter into Heaven, because if we did, we would

be there. We would be there because we are *already* there. In other words, we would awaken from the dream that tells us we are not in Heaven. "You are at home in God, dreaming of exile . . ." (T-10.I.2:1). Everything here is a dream. We are at home in God. That is our reality. We never left. We are still God's one Son, perfectly at one with Him, undifferentiated from Him, but we are dreaming we are in an exile of separation, protected by the defense of specialness.

Thus, I am a special person with special needs, and you are a special person with special abilities that can meet my special needs. My special needs and your special abilities will meet, and that is the "marriage made in Heaven," which of course is really hell, but we think it is Heaven. It is Heaven, because it is our version of Heaven. Our version of Heaven is existence, and it doesn't matter whether it is a happy existence or a miserable existence. It doesn't matter whether we are happy or sad, alive or dead. If I am dead, then I existed at one point, and depending on what my belief system is, I may continue to exist after my body dies. As long as we exist, everything is okay. That is the Kingdom of Heaven to the ego.

Attack is a wonderful way of reinforcing our existence. Your existence threatens mine; therefore, I am entitled to defend myself. Likewise, you believe my existence threatens yours, and so you believe you are entitled to defend yourself. That is what most relationships are all about. In fact, that is what *all* relationships are about until we recognize what they are truly about, and then change our minds and ask for help. They are all about trying to reaffirm our existence.

There is an important section near the end of Chapter 28 called "The Secret Vows" that talks about the vows we make with each other (T-28.VI). The context of the discussion is sickness, but the principle works for everything else. We all make a vow—in fact there is one paragraph that talks about an oath—that we continually make to each other to uphold our existence. It doesn't matter who is on top, who wins, who loses, or who gains. It doesn't make any difference, as long as we help each other affirm the reality of our existence here as bodies, as separated creatures. It doesn't matter whether you think you are in a loving relationship or in a hateful relationship because they are the same. And they are the same because ultimately they serve the same purpose, and not only that, underneath the seeming love there lies hate anyway. They reflect a secret vow, a sacred oath, a promise to reinforce each other's existence that we will never ever break. The ego doesn't care if we love each other for 50 years or hate each other for 50 years, as long as there is an "each other."

That is another way of understanding why, when we wrote our scripts as individuals and dreamed our dream, we began our physical life with parents. They are the "other." First, there are two of them. There have to be two if there is going to be a third. At some point the baby is born. Now there is an "other" relating to the two others, or parental substitutes. It doesn't make any difference. There is always an "other." The infant cannot survive without the aid of someone else. If there is no one else, the infant will die, because it will not be able to get food

or protect itself. Thus, built into the system is the fact that there is an "other." That is what we think of as our physical birth, but that is just a re-enactment of the birth of the ego.

The ego is born out of its opposition to God. That is why the Course discusses the authority problem. Everyone here has an authority problem. Who is the author of my existence? God and the ego, from the ego's point of view, are fighting for authorship of our existence. And, of course, the god who is fighting is just a projection of the ego, because the true God does not even know we left because we did *not* leave. There always has to be someone in opposition.

The ego was born in its belief that it was opposed to God and God was opposing us. *One or the other*. There is a line from the teachers' manual that says, "Think not He has forgotten" (M-17.7:4). God has never forgotten our sin; therefore, He, "an angry father, pursues his guilty son. Kill or be killed . . ." (M-17.7:10-11). *One or the other*. That is the ontological foundation for *everything* that has ever happened. The entire physical universe spanning billions and billions of years—not just our solar system or galaxy—stems from the projection of that one thought of *one or the other*. We (the one Son) opposed God by leaving Him and telling Him, in effect, that His Love was not enough, and that we wanted something more than the Everything. We then projected that out and believed God now was leaving us, and was angry at us. That is the eternal battle from which we seek to escape; but we will never escape. We cannot escape because of that memory that is always there: "Think not He has forgotten." God will never forget what we did.

That is what continually impels us to make the world real. The question people sometimes ask is, why do people keep coming back here? Don't they know? Don't they remember how awful it was? Who wants to go through adolescence again? Who wants to struggle with all these awful relationships? Who wants to go through the pain of getting old and then dying? Who wants to do that? Why do we keep doing it? Well, it is not that we forget. We damn well remember. We *want* the suffering, the pain, the *Sturm und Drang* of our lives. We want the conflict, because that is what proves we exist. That is what people don't understand. We remember our purpose. We like being individuals, which is why Jesus continually calls us insane. We forget the pain—not the physical and psychological pain: *that* we remember and we love. We love the fact that we are here. What we forget is the pain of being separated, how costly it is to us. That fleeting moment of the pleasure of telling God to get lost, believing we got away with it, and then making up a whole world to support the fact that we got away with it, sustains us—and we forget the agony. There are no words in any language to truly embrace the searing agony and pain of being separated. All we know is that we cherish our existence, and would gladly die—and we *do* die over and over again—to sustain that existence.

What we need to do with this course is let ourselves be lifted up above the battleground and look with Jesus back down on what this world is really like. That is why there are so many passages in this course that talk about what the world is like. Practically nothing in this

course talks about what Heaven is like, but so much of it talks about what the world is like and what life in the body is like. The beginning of Chapter 13 is one of those incisive passages that depict this. The passage begins with the line, "The world you see is the delusional system of those made mad by guilt" (T-13.in.2:2). It is the guilt over the belief that we destroyed Heaven. *One or the other*: If I exist, Heaven must be destroyed. Then Jesus describes what the world is like and what it is like to be in a body. He ends the passage by saying, "If this were the real world, God *would* be cruel" (T-13.in.3:1). If this is what reality really is, God *would* be cruel, because who would create a world in which there is such pain and suffering? Well, the answer is clearly, not God. *We* did it, and there is a method in our madness, a reason for our doing it, and the reason is that it proves we pulled off the impossible. It clearly demonstrates that we will never get back home. We believe it because we do not want to get back. We do not want to enter into God's Presence.

There is another important line that says, "The memory of God comes to the quiet mind" (T-23.I.1:1). Well, we do not want the memory of God. If we allow that memory to dawn on our awareness, we will disappear into it, because we could not withstand the Love of that thought if we let ourselves experience it. So we don't let ourselves experience it. If "the memory of God comes to the quiet mind," all we have to do is keep our minds busy. Well, sin, guilt, and fear keep our minds very busy. Then our minds project all this out, we make up a world, and then are continually busy reinforcing the fact there is a world here. It seems as if our bodies are busy. They are always doing something. Even when we think we are sleeping, our hearts are pumping, our lungs are breathing, our digestive system is working. When we are awake, we all know how busy we usually are, not only with what our bodies do, but in terms of how we think. We are always very busy, and it is all purposive because "the memory of God comes to the quiet mind."

If we are afraid of that quiet because of what it will lead us to, we just have to keep our mind and our self in a perpetual state of disquiet, and we are all very good at making up one problem after another. We are expert at it, masters at it. Just the way we made the body so imperfect is proof of that. We always have to eat, to breathe, and to eliminate. We always have to do something, and as we get older, things become more and more problematic. Then enter the whole idea of relationships on a psychological level, and it becomes almost impossible. It is all purposive. We do not want to enter into God's Presence, and so we continually attack His Son, His Son being ourselves and everyone in our lives. Again, it doesn't matter whether we are attacking ourselves or someone else.