

A Course in Miracles:
A Hope-filled Spirituality

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Part VII
"Entering God's Presence"

"You cannot enter God's Presence if you attack His Son" is a line from the section "The Inheritance of God's Son" in Chapter 11 of the text. It is another of those sentences that contain within them the whole theory of the Course. It helps us understand why it is that we get angry, criticize, judge, and find fault. Also in that section, and actually in the previous section as well as many other places in the Course, we are taught that attacking others is no different from attacking one's self. Self-blame is the same as blame because, since there is no world out there and *projection makes perception*, whatever we feel about ourselves we will then express outwardly. Whatever we express outwardly is a direct result of what we are feeling inside.

Thus, the idea that we cannot enter God's Presence if we attack His Son works for self-attack as well as attack of others. Our terror of entering into God's Presence is why we made the world in the first place, and one of the principal ways of defending against that fear and protecting ourselves from entering into God's Presence is to attack. That is why we are told in the Course that "the world was made as an attack on God" (W-pII.3.2:1). It was! Everything here is an attack on God: being born is an attack on God, taking a breath is an attack on God, because all this makes the body real, and if we are bodies, we are not minds. If we are not minds, there is no way we can gain access to the thought that leads us to the Mind, the Mind of God or the Mind of Christ. So we attack because we do *not* want to enter into God's Presence.

The fourth obstacle to peace, "The Fear of God," is a wonderful section for many reasons. "The Obstacles to Peace" sections in Chapter 19 of the text take us on a journey, and when we reach the fourth obstacle, the idea is that we are about ready to penetrate the final veil—to undo the final obstacle and be in God's Presence, which is really to be in the Presence of our true Self. That final section does not talk about God. It is not about unity with the Godhead or about "a Oneness joined as One"; it is not about any fancy, high-falutin' non-dualistic ideas. What it talks about is forgiveness of your brother. That is what makes the Course so different from any other spirituality. At the same time that it contains all these lofty, wonderful ideas about our oneness with God, the illusory nature of the physical universe, and the only reality

being God and God's Oneness, it encourages us and gives us very specific guidelines on how to live in this illusory world. The principle that should govern our everyday living here is forgiveness. That is the way we achieve our ultimate goal of returning to what one passage refers to as "a Oneness joined as One" (T-25.I.7:1). The way we enter God's Presence is through the complete forgiveness of one other person, whoever that special love or hate object is.

Rather than talk about what God's Presence is like, the Course tells us how to attain God's Presence, how to return to where we never left. The theme of this class, *You cannot enter God's Presence if you attack His Son*, sums it all up. That is how we do it. It also gives us a way of understanding why we are continually attacking ourselves and each other. No matter how many years we may have been studying this material and being devout, sincere, and serious about it, it does not stop us from judging, finding fault, criticizing, getting angry; and it certainly does not stop us from having all the feelings of self-hatred that are self-attack or guilt. This explains why.

I always like to quote the famous line from *Hamlet*, "Though this be madness, yet there is method in it." There is a method in our madness. There is a reason, a purpose behind everything that we do here, especially for all of our attack thoughts. It is a major theme of the workbook, a major theme of everything in this course. There is that one important lesson, "Holding grievances is an attack on God's plan for salvation" (W-pl.72). Well, God's plan for salvation is forgiveness. If we are holding grievances, obviously we are not forgiving. We hold grievances for a reason: We don't want to accept God's plan for salvation, which is forgiveness. The ultimate consummation of that plan is the acceptance of the Atonement. We make up problems for a reason. There is a reason, not only for getting angry, but for making ourselves anxious, fearful, and depressed. There is a reason for making up problems when there are no problems, for making up a world and believing there is a world when there is no world. There is a reason behind it all.

The section "What Is the Peace of God?" in the teachers' manual tells us very clearly that when we get angry, it is like having a curtain fall and then the peace of God is gone (M-20.3-4). That is a purposive statement. We get angry *because* we do not want the peace of God—we *want* there to be a curtain, something between us and God's peace, something between us and our entering into God's Presence. That is why we get angry; that is why we indulge all of our specialness thoughts and all of our specialness practices. That is why anything we do that makes the phenomenal universe, the physical world real is purposive. Again, that is what makes this Course unique.

Many other spiritualities, especially in the East, talk about the world being an illusion. Yet none of them talks about the purposive nature of the world, why we made the world, why we choose to be born into this world, why we continually choose to have all these thoughts,

however illusory they may be. There is a reason for all of that: We are terrified of disappearing into the Presence beyond the veil. There is that wonderful line that comes near the end of the fourth obstacle to peace where Jesus says to us, "Together we will disappear into the Presence beyond the veil, not to be lost but found; not to be seen but known" (T-19.IV-D.19:1)—no longer to be in the world of perception, the world of subject and object, the world of duality, the world of bodies, but to be known, which in the Course is a synonym for Heaven or Oneness.

The key word in that statement is "together." "Together we will disappear into the Presence beyond the veil..." *Together*, Jesus says, you and I, and with us, all of our brothers. The same section also says that we lift this veil *together, or not at all* (T-19.IV-D.12:8; my italics). The person we do it with together is anyone whom we are excluding, any object of our specialness, special love or special hate. We lift the veil *together, or not at all*, which is the Holy Spirit's correction for the ego principle of *one or the other*. *One or the other* is what established the ego as a seeming reality, as a separated entity. It was either God's Love and perfect Oneness, or our separation and special love, because there cannot be both. When we chose to believe in the lies of the ego, when we chose to believe that the "tiny, mad idea" of being separate from God was real, and we took it seriously, at that moment the ego was born. That is the moment when the principle of *one or the other* came into ascendancy. Either I exist or God is.

Early in the text, Jesus contrasts existence and being. Being is a state of reality; existence is our seeming life in this world. We can say the ego exists; spirit is. There is a line in the workbook that says, "We say 'God is,' and then we cease to speak" (W-pl.169.5:4). What else can you say? God is, meaning God is perfect Being. That is the state of perfect Oneness. "We say 'God is,' and then we cease to speak, for in that knowledge words are meaningless." There are no lips to say the words, and no ears to hear, because all there is in reality is "a Oneness joined as One," an undifferentiated unity, which is how many of the mystics refer to that experience. There is no beginning and no end. There is a beautiful passage in the workbook that describes how the lights of Heaven light, and there is no place where one ends and another begins (W-pl.129.7:5). They all become one light, one love, one Self.