

Our Gratitude to God

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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part II

Gratitude to Jesus

I will give a brief presentation about Jesus now and then later discuss in greater depth our gratitude to him. He makes it clear at the beginning of the text that our fear of God is so great and the seeming distance between ourselves and Him so immense that return to Him seems impossible (T-1.II.4:3). In a different context later in the text, he says that it is not possible to go from the nightmare terrors that we all experience in this world directly to God or to Heaven (T-27.VII.13:4-5). The essence of the nightmare Jesus is talking about is that God will get us and destroy us. So what we need are intermediate steps, what the Course calls happy dreams, whereby we still believe we are here, but the dreams now become filled with forgiveness instead of attack and judgment. We do not jump right into God's Arms from an experience of being totally on our own and believing that He is the enemy or even that He does not exist. We need a middle ground, and being that middle ground is the function of the Holy Spirit or Jesus.

The Course uses Jesus and the Holy Spirit interchangeably in terms of Their role as our inner Teacher. We can speak of Jesus, as the Course does, as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit; and so Jesus and the Holy Spirit can be thought of as synonyms for each other on the level of function. We need Jesus as an intermediary because the distance between ourselves and God is so great. He asks us to imagine this as on a vertical continuum, a line that goes up and down, and that God is at the top, we are at the bottom, and he stands in between (T-1.II.6). An image he gave Helen, which is not part of the Course itself but is relevant here, is that his hands are in the sky and his feet are on the ground. In a sense, he bridges the gap between ourselves and God, as a Son of God between himself and God, and as an elder brother, between him and ourselves. This is one of the major themes of *A Course in Miracles*, and is an integral part of its process. The only way we can truly forgive and change our mind about each other, ourselves, and our relationship with God is with his or the Holy Spirit's help. The belief that we can do it without him is nothing more than the reflection of the original thought the Son had with God: "I can do it without You. I don't need You. I am smart enough and inwardly strong enough. I can do this without Your help!" That is why this is such an important theme.

At the end of the teacher's manual, in the section called "As For the Rest..." (M-29), we are reminded of the importance of asking the Holy Spirit for help—that this is the way out of hell for us, the way to escape from guilt. What we do with the Holy Spirit is a reflection of what we believe we did with God. If I believe that I have separated from God, then I must also believe that my salvation depends on my continuing to separate from Him. This means that that Presence of Love in my mind is seen as a threat and that I must remain separate from It. Then my experience would be that I do not have to ask Him for help, that I can do everything my way, as in the famous Frank Sinatra song.

The reason that asking the Holy Spirit's help is the way out of guilt is that it can remind us that we do not have to be separate, and that to ask Him for help is not an insult to our intelligence, inner strength, or to our mind. It is an expression of strength. The Course explains how the ego always gets humility and arrogance reversed. What the ego thinks is humble is really arrogant; and what it thinks is arrogant is really humble. It is not arrogant to believe that God's Love is present within us, but it is arrogant to believe that we can be separate from Him. There is a wonderful line in the text that says, "Be humble before Him, and yet great *in* Him" (T-15.IV.3:1). Being humble before God is the reminder that He is the One Who created us; we did not create Him. Yet, we are great *in* Him because our Identity is Christ. We should then be grateful to God, because it is His greatness, His love, His Self that we share. Thus, to deny the importance of our personal relationship with the Holy Spirit or Jesus is the exact same mistake as denying our relationship with God.

The Course teaches that it is not necessary to get back in touch with that original moment when terror took the place of love, as that is much too fearful for us, and not really necessary. Our experience within the dream and the separated mind that we identify with as our self is that there is a loving Presence within, and that we can make the same choice with that loving Presence that we did right at the original moment. If I can choose to see the Holy Spirit or Jesus as my Friend, and turn to His love for support, comfort, and help, then what I am really doing is choosing the instant of love taking the place of terror. Two things occurred in that original ontological moment: terror seemed to take the place of love, and the ego thought system was born. Then, by the Holy Spirit's Presence in our mind, love took the place of terror. Since both are fully present in our mind, we then have the choice.

The ego taught us at the beginning that we should not be grateful for the Holy Spirit's Presence in our mind, but rather for *its* presence, because the ego now is who we are. The ego is this voice that speaks of total freedom. It tells us that we are now finally free from that tyrant God—we are on our own and can now do our own thing. We can make up the world exactly as we want to, which is what we proceeded to do, and now we are on our own. Therefore, we should be grateful to the ego, because it is the ego that will save us from the wrath of God. The loving Presence of the Holy Spirit in our mind, we are now taught, is not a Presence we should be grateful to or for, but rather a Presence we should avoid. The ego tells us that the Holy Spirit really is God's general, Whom He has dispatched into our mind to capture us and bring us back to God under the guise of loving us, but He really wants to bring us back to God so He will destroy us.

A Course in Miracles explains that it was at this point that love turned into fear, and fear turned into love. In other words, we grew to be afraid of the true Presence of Love in our mind and became attracted to the presence of fear instead. The ego taught us that fear is what will save us. So the loving Presence of God in our mind, which we *should* feel grateful for, we now think we have no reason to feel grateful for, because after all, the Holy Spirit is the enemy, not our friend. The ego's hate, sin, guilt, and fear are certainly not what we should be grateful for; yet, according to its warped insanity these now become our friends, protectors, and allies. And we will put upon Jesus, who in the Western world is the greatest symbol of God's Love, all of the thoughts and feelings we have towards God. There is a part of us that loves him and yearns to go back home with him, and yet the other part of us believes he is our enemy, and that to follow him means instant death.

That explains why it is so difficult for us in this world to feel grateful to Jesus. There is a part of our mind that is insane, and yet very real to us, that believes that to take his hand and follow him home means

the end of us. Christianity has taught for almost two thousand years that if you take the hand of Jesus and go back home, things might end up okay; but in the interim, you are going to have to suffer, sacrifice, and give up things. The more blood you shed, the better Jesus likes it, not to mention God. Thus, the theology that arose from the life of Jesus quickly turned into the theology of the ego. As a result, while it would be considered sacrilegious to feel ungrateful to Jesus—because, look what he has done for us!—there is a part of our mind that feels absolutely no gratitude to him; and indeed, we feel justified in staying as far away from him as possible.

There are a number of ways of maintaining distance between Jesus and ourselves. One way, of course, is simply to deny him and pretend that he or any other symbol of God's Love is not there. A more subtle way is to believe in him but change the meaning of his life, which is what Christians have done for centuries. Thus, rather than being a true savior of love and peace, he becomes a savior who represents guilt, sacrifice, suffering, and division. That is what *A Course in Miracles* means when it says, "Some bitter idols have been made of him who would be only brother to the world" (C-5.5:7). Once we believe in these bitter idols—for Christians he is a symbol of suffering and sacrifice; for Jews he is a symbol of persecution and victimhood—then we have no reason to feel grateful to him. That is why his presence in the Course is so primary.

Often, people ask why, if the message of *A Course in Miracles* is universal, is it Christian in its language, and Jesus is so prominent. What is the big deal about him being the author, and why does he talk about himself so much? Well, Jesus has been the Western world's greatest symbol of God's Love, and terribly misunderstood. All the projections we have placed upon God we also have placed upon him. We really cannot know God in this world, but we can know Jesus, so his forgiveness becomes extremely important. He does not need *our* forgiveness, because he does not have an ego that needs to experience that from us. But *we* need that forgiveness. In a number of places he says that he needs us to forgive him; otherwise, he cannot help us (see, for example, T-19.IV-B.6-8; T-20.II.4). The unforgiveness we experience toward him then becomes a block, and it interferes not only with his love for us, but also with our awareness of God's Love for us.