

Our Gratitude to God

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part IX

"Love is the way I walk in gratitude" (cont.)

We return now to the lesson "Love is the way I walk in gratitude."

(W-pl.195.3:1) Your brother is your "enemy" because you see in him the rival for your peace . . .

The word "enemy" is in quotes because the ego tells us our brother is our enemy, but our brother is really our friend. Seeing in our brother a rival for our peace logically follows from what we have talked about. The fundamental principle of the ego thought system is that differences are real, beginning with the idea that God is the Creator and we are not. The ego's basic teaching is that God stole from us (the one Son); we stole from Him, and now He is going to steal back what we took. We deny that thought, project it out, and then make up a world of differences.

All that the ego needs to keep itself going is for there to be differences in the world. Therefore, all that is needed to undo the entire ego thought system is to have an experience of unity in the world, because unity is not of the ego, just as differences are not of God. This does not mean that *A Course in Miracles* is asking us to deny our experience of differences in the world. Obviously the world is filled with differences—we cannot deny that there are different sexes, hair colors, colors and styles of clothing, etc. What the Course is asking of us is that we not make these differences important. The differences we acknowledge in this world are really superficial, but we make them extremely important.

In Heaven there is a difference between God and Christ: God is the Creator; Christ is the created; but the difference does not mean anything. In fact, in Heaven there is no consciousness that even sees differences. The ego separates from God, looks at the difference, and says the difference means something—it is very serious. That is the origin of our sin, guilt, fear, and ultimately of the world. Again, we are not asked to deny that there are differences in this world, but rather not to make the differences real by judging them. This means neither attacking nor worshipping the differences.

Clearly, in this world Jesus is different from us, as he says in the Course (T-1.II.3); but the difference is only superficial and temporary. He thus would ask us not to make the differences between us and him real. He wants us to use the differences just as a way of learning that there are no differences: "Let my love and peace, which do not have any ego in them, teach you that that same love and peace is in you, so you can learn that you are just like me." As we discussed earlier, what the Church did was to turn everything upside down and make the difference between Jesus and us, which was certainly real enough in this world, ontologically real. It made that difference God's idea, at which point there could be no way of being totally one with Jesus, let alone with God. The idea is not to deny our experience of differences, though.

It is extremely important to feel a sense of gratitude to Jesus because by identifying with his love and letting his love help us, we eventually learn that we *are* his love, and that there are no differences between us. The gratitude we feel in this world, whether it is toward Jesus or other people, is simply a temporary gratitude, because, again, there is no gratitude in Heaven; our gratitude is the undoing or correction of the ingratitude of the ego, which says that you and I are different. We are different because you are trying to steal from me, which then justifies my trying to steal back from you to defend myself. Thus, the gratitude that *A Course in Miracles* is talking about is feeling grateful for the opportunity to learn through perceived differences that we are not different from each other.

Within the ego thought system, differences are the "state of heaven," which means you and I cannot be alike. Therefore, if I am guilty and sinful, you are the opposite: guiltless and sinless. It cannot be the case that we are both the same. Why are you the innocent one and I the guilty one?—because I was innocent first and you stole it from me; so now I am justified in stealing back the innocence. This happens through projection, because projection is the dynamic or the name we give to the mechanism whereby I take something in my mind that I have rejected and throw it out on you. Thus, I take the guilt in my mind and say I am not guilty, *you* are. By virtue of projecting my guilt onto you, you now have it, which means, by the law of differences, that I am innocent. But it cannot be that we are both the same, because that would be the end of the ego system. And so our ego will never allow us to be the same.

To repeat, this does not mean that we should deny the differences that exist in our experience in the world; we just should not make them into a big deal. The truth of all this, which certainly is what the Course is leading us to, is the recognition that I am sinless and so are you. If I am sinless, you *must* be sinless. And if you are sinless, I *must* be sinless. It cannot be that we are different. What is essential is that I turn to the right-hand chair, where Jesus is sitting and identify with his teaching that tells me we are all the same. If I turn to the left and listen to the ego, then I will be convinced that we are different. I then become the one who is guilty. Since my guilt is so intolerable to me, I must do everything in my power to project it onto you and to justify it. Therefore I say you are the guilty one and I am innocent.

Picking up on the next part of sentence:

(3:1) Your brother is your "enemy" because you see in him the rival for your peace . . .

If I have peace, then you do not have it. And if I have peace and you do not, you are going to want to get it from me. That is why only one of us can be peaceful. You and I then become rivals. In the special love bargain, which we all engage in, I try to fool you into thinking you have the peace of God, when I secretly know that I am the one who has it. But if you really knew that I have the peace, you would come after me to steal it back. Therefore, what I try to do is fool you into thinking that you really have peace and love. My terror is that some morning you are going to wake up and suddenly realize, "Just a minute now. I don't have it at all. He has it!" Then I'm in trouble!

What happens—what the world calls love but it is really special love—is that we try to make the other person feel good so he or she will leave us alone and not realize that we have the treasure. It is a wonderful system, right? I guess everyone can identify with that. That is what special relationships are all about. In "The Laws of Chaos," the biblical image of the pearl of great price is used in discussing this aspect of specialness (T-23.II.11:2). But for the ego system, the pearl of great price is specialness. If I have it, if I am specially loved by God, then you cannot have it—that is my fear. You then become:

(3:1) . . . a plunderer who takes his joy from you, and leaves you nothing but a black despair so bitter and relentless that there is no hope remaining.

A Course in Miracles summarizes the ego system in one passage in the teacher's manual in this very powerful statement: "Kill or be killed" (M-17.7.11). That is the ego law. Originally it was either God kills me or I kill Him. But in this world, it develops into: I have it, and you do not have it; and if I have it and you do not, then I have killed you. I may not have killed you physically; but if you do not have the peace and Love of God, it also means you do not have the life of God, which means you are virtually dead. That is what this passage is talking about.

Once I perceive you as someone who wants to steal from me, what is left is this:

(3:2-3) Now is vengeance all there is to wish for. Now can you but try to bring him down to lie in death with you, as useless as yourself; as little left within his grasping fingers as in yours.

I have basically judged myself as being dead, because I believe I have stolen from God and that He is going to steal back from me; therefore I am nothing. I believe you are the one who has taken it from me. So now what I want to do is kill you the way that I have been killed. And just as I believe that there is nothing left in me, I do not want you to have what I no longer have, either. I try to disguise all this somehow by pretending that I have gotten life from you. One of the important sections in the text on special relationships describes this life being taken from you as insanity (T-16.V). It talks about the bargaining table between two people being really like an altar of death, in which each one tries to slay the other. Then from having slain that person, stealing the essence from that person and making it one's own, one believes that life comes from death—that I can kill you off, kill myself off, and from this somehow fashion something that is living, happy, loving, and peaceful (see T-16.V.11). Life, though, cannot come from death. Life can only come from life. Yet what I try to do is somehow kill off myself because I believe that I am nothing and that I need something from you. And then I try to kill you off to get that from you. In effect what happens is your dead body is on the altar and my dead body is on the altar, but I have the illusion of life. That is why the Course says—also in "The Laws of Chaos"—that "there is no life outside of Heaven" (T-23.II.19:1). There is no life here at all.

(3:3) Now is vengeance all there is to wish for.

The idea is that once I believe that everyone is out to steal from me, then my vengeance is perfectly justified. What this basically means is that every one of us is an avenger, which then means that every one of us is a victimizer. However, what we all try to do is justify our being a victimizer so we then feel that someone else took the first step. The section in the text called "Self-Concept versus Self" (T-31.V) talks about this a great detail, using the term *the face of innocence*. In this mode we believe that our attack is justified because someone else attacked us first. What has really happened is that we have forgotten the *cause* of our attack. In other words, when I attack you and you attack me back, I forget that I attacked you first in my mind, and all I perceive then is your attack. I forget that from my point of view, the reason you are attacking me is that I attacked you first.

Thus, the reason God is attacking me is that I attacked Him first, but I have forgotten my attack thoughts toward you. All that I am aware of are your attack thoughts toward me—that you are trying to steal Heaven from me. I have forgotten that I had first stolen it from you. Therefore, I am now justified in being vengeful.