

Our Gratitude to God

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part VI

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

(W-pl.195.1:7) Your gratitude is due to Him alone Who made all cause of sorrow disappear throughout the world.

The "Him" can be understood as being both God and the Holy Spirit. Actually, it makes more sense to think of it as the Holy Spirit Who ends all sorrow in this world simply by His Presence in our mind. The cause of sorrow in the world comes directly from the fact that we believe we have excluded God's Love from our mind and all that is left is the pain of the ego. Thus, the sorrow outside is nothing more than a mirror or reflection of the sorrow within our own mind. But the acceptance of the Holy Spirit is the reflection of the Love within us that is the end of sorrow, because if we choose to identify with the Holy Spirit, we are choosing to identify with His thought system that says there is no separation from God, there is no guilt or sin that demands punishment, and therefore there is no pain.

The end of sorrow in the world, thus, has nothing to do with the world, but with the sorrow in our mind. And all that is necessary to end the sorrow in the mind—which is the cause of any sorrow that we may feel externally—is simply to turn back to the One Who loves us, and to feel grateful that it is His Presence in our mind with which we are joining; it is His Presence in our mind that is true, not the presence of the ego. Remember, the ego taught us at the beginning that we should not feel grateful for the loving Presence of the Holy Spirit in our minds, because that Presence will destroy us; but we should feel grateful for the ego's presence, because that presence will save us. True gratitude, which is the end of sorrow, comes when we truly feel that the Holy Spirit is the only One Who can save us. His Love is reality and not the ego's fear.

What is also expressed in this paragraph is the idea that the ego's notion of gratitude is clearly based upon differences, separation, and, as explained later, upon comparison: your lot in life is terrible and mine is good, and therefore I am grateful; your lot is worse than mine, or my lot is worse than yours, which just reinforces the idea that I have been unfairly treated. There is a part of me that luxuriates in that, because if I have been unfairly treated, it means that the Holy Spirit is a liar, God is a liar, and the ego is correct. My ego thought system begins with the thought that I have been unfairly treated, because God created me; I did not create Him; and that's not fair. The idea that we are different is one of the key ideas in the entire Course—it is essential for understanding what the ego thought system and all of our specialness is about.

The lesson says later (6:3) that we should be grateful for all living things, but this does not mean for what they do or do not do for us. We should be grateful to them because they are one with us, and they offer us the opportunity of remembering this oneness. That is how gratitude is born. That Presence of Love, which the Holy Spirit represents in our mind, is telling us we never left God's Love, which means

we are still one with Him. And that, of course, is the exact opposite of the ego thought system that says that we *have* left God's Mind and His Love, and we will never get it back—we are different.

One way of understanding the beginning of the ego's dream is to think of the Son of God as having separated from God, then seeing Him as separate and different (God is the Creator, the Son is the created), and then attacking that difference. It was a difference that the ego made very real and judged to be unfair. That was the beginning of the entire dream, and everything that has occurred since that moment within the dream is nothing more than the reflection of that original perception of differences. That is why we see everyone as different and are always comparing. All ego judgment is based upon a standard in our mind of how a person should behave, think, and be. When you deviate from that, I judge you, and feel perfectly justified in making that judgment.

We should feel gratitude for all living things because they reflect back to us the fact that we are *not* separate. Even though there is an illusion of separation and differences here, in truth we are not separate. Using the image of a movie theater, as we are sitting in the theater looking at the screen, it appears as if things are happening out there, and that there are different people with different emotions. I identify with certain ones and against others. I make choices of whom I like or do not like, as if there were real differences. I believe there are real differences out there on the screen because there are real differences in myself. By turning to Jesus sitting next to me in the theater, I allow him to help me recognize that there are no differences, only a *belief* in differences, and I can change that belief.

That is where the experience of gratitude comes from. My gratitude is to Jesus, who teaches me that there are no differences; and my gratitude is also for the screen, because it is the screen over the world that offers me the opportunity to learn that lesson. What Jesus taught two thousand years ago is the same message now in the Course—that you he and I are not different, which, of course, the world almost immediately got upside down, so that he became different from the rest of us. By showing us that death has no effect on his love and his life, he is saying there are no differences; God's Love cannot be split or attacked; God's Love is simply there.

(W-pl.195.2:1) It is insane to offer thanks because of suffering.

This is the same idea, that it makes no sense to thank God for our suffering and pain. This line is here specifically to counteract the prevailing Christian view that it *is* God's Will that we suffer. I remember the story a priest friend of mine told me many years ago. He had been driving down a country road alone at night, and sleet began to fall and the road became very slippery. His car skidded off the road and went over an embankment. It was stopped by some trees, so it didn't roll over. Obviously, he was terrified. And he told me that as this was happening, he just kept saying, "Thank you, Jesus; thank you, Jesus; thank you, Jesus." Not, "*Help* me, Jesus," but "*Thank you*, Jesus"—as if this were the will of Jesus. That is a hell of a Lord to have around who can cause your car to go skidding off the road! What he was trying to do was force himself to feel gratitude, because he believed that everything that happened was God's loving Will—that Jesus' way of helping him was to cause him to skid off the road and almost get killed. That is what this passage is talking about: "It is insane to offer thanks because of suffering."

It is the same as what Mother Teresa said—that suffering is "a kiss from God." That thought worked very well within her system, and it would have been insane to try to change it. But her system is not that of *A Course in Miracles*—it is a totally different spirituality. In the context of the Course, it makes no sense to believe that it is God's Will that we suffer. It is *our* will that we suffer. *We* are the ones who choose

suffering. It is God's Will, through the Holy Spirit, to have us learn from the suffering we have chosen; but that is much different from saying it is God's Will that we suffer. The Course says that the ego speaks first and is wrong (T-5.VI.3:5; 4:1-2). The ego always wants us to suffer and be in pain—whether I suffer or you do. Pain and suffering are inherent in the ego's system. But once we have chosen that, once we have chosen this horror movie as the movie we are going to observe as we are sitting in the theater, there is still that loving presence next to us who tells us there is another way of looking at it. And as the Course explains, what the ego makes to harm, the Holy Spirit uses to heal (T-25.VI.4:1). That is also what the Course means when it says that the Holy Spirit never takes away our special relationships (T-15.V.5; T-17.III.6). We are the ones who made specialness to attack and to keep separate from each other. The Holy Spirit uses those relationships as a classroom in which we learn what forgiveness is.

Let me briefly address the idea of karma here, as some people think that when something bad happens to them, it was simply a lesson they needed to learn. Karma is basically cause and effect. The Course certainly talks a great deal about cause and effect, but its interpretation differs from the traditional views of karma, since the Course does not believe time is linear, and the laws of karma as they are usually understood and practiced have to do with linearity of time. The Course says that we have no neutral thoughts, and every thought we have has an effect. If I have a loving thought, there will be loving effects; if I have an angry thought, there will be negative effects.

Again, it is extremely important to recognize that suffering is not God's Will. There is an earlier workbook lesson that says, "God's Will for me is perfect happiness" (W-pl.101). The ego's version of that, of course, is that God's Will for me is perfect misery, pain, and suffering. One of the ideas *A Course in Miracles* attempts to correct is this insane idea that God is involved in our pain and our suffering. The rationalization that always emerges from that is, Yes, God does cause us suffering and pain, but He does it because He loves us. It is the same thing when a father beats up a child and says, "This hurts me more than it hurts you" or "I am doing this for your own good."