

## Our Gratitude to God

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

### Part VII

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

**(W-pl.195.2:1-2) It is insane to offer thanks because of suffering. But it is equally insane to fail in gratitude to One Who offers you the certain means whereby all pain is healed, and suffering replaced with laughter and with happiness.**

It is insane to blame God or the Holy Spirit for our suffering, and it is just as insane not to feel grateful to the Presence of the Holy Spirit Who offers us another way of looking at the circumstances in our lives. That really is the sum and substance of the entire Course: to have us learn that there is another thought system in our mind that enables us to look at the situations and relationships in our lives differently.

To repeat, the Holy Spirit does not cause pain and suffering in the world. His loving Presence in our mind offers us the opportunity to look at it differently. We are the ones who write the script; He is the One Who corrects it. And the correction is automatic—simply by the fact that His Love is there. The purpose of *A Course in Miracles* is to help us bring the darkness of our illusions to the Holy Spirit's light, and our anger and guilt to His Love. The way we do that is simply to look at our anger and guilt. It is the bringing of these and all other terrible and painful thoughts to Him that undoes them. A passage at the end of Chapter 27 in the text says in this context, "He bids you bring each terrible effect to Him that you may look together on its foolish cause and laugh with Him a while. *You* judge effects, but *He* has judged their cause" (T-27.VIII.9:3-4). The terrible effects we are asked to bring to the Holy Spirit are all of the circumstances in our lives that cause us pain or seem to cause us pain—everything that upsets us medically, physically, psychologically, etc. We bring those effects back within our mind to His Love, and together with that Love, we look at them. Then we realize that the cause of all external pain is nothing more than the guilt or the pain that is in our own mind.

When I can look at that cause with Jesus' love next to me, I realize the cause of this pain is the belief that I am separate from God's Love. But if I am sitting in the theater right next to the reflection of God's Love, obviously I am not separate from it. That is how you change and undo the cause. That is what it means to be grateful to the Holy Spirit Who offers us the means of healing all of our pain.

The replacement of suffering by laughter is also a key theme in the Course—not laughter that mocks us or other people, but laughter that comes from the idea that the thought of being separate from God is simply silly. Not only has it had no consequences, it never happened in the first place. Thus the laughter. A workbook lesson later on quotes from the Book of Revelation: "God will wipe away all tears" (W-pll.301.h). God does not wipe away all tears with a handkerchief—He wipes away all tears through *our* joining with His Presence in our mind. We learn how to smile at the tears. This process does not make the tears real and then do something about them—the traditional way of the world, which always makes error real and then attempts to change it. What we do is bring our tears to His Love, and

then the Love automatically dissipates the tears, just as when we bring darkness to the light, the light must dispel the darkness.

**(W-pl.195.2:3) Nor could the even partly sane refuse to take the steps which He directs, and follow in the way He sets before them, to escape a prison that they thought contained no door to the deliverance they now perceive.**

Jesus may be giving us the benefit of the doubt in terms of only being "partly insane." But I guess he figures if we came this far already (Lesson 195), we must have learned something. What we have learned is that there really is an end to our pain and suffering.

One of the primary thoughts of the ego is that once we have identified with the ego thought system—which means we have shut off the Holy Spirit's Voice and do not listen to it—we then believe there is no way out. In other words, we are now caught in a prison that has no door. The ego then tells us that there really is a door: the world and all the pleasures the world can give us. But there is a part of our mind that knows that will never work. That is why everyone in this world is always driven to have more and more, to become better and better. Yet, we know in the end that there is no hope because we are going to die. Scientists are even telling us that at some point, millions of years from now, the earth is going to die. It is going to burn up in the sun, or the universe is going to explode, etc. So it is not only that this body, which is our home, is going to die, or this planet, but the whole universe that we believe is our home is not going to last. So there is no hope.

There is no hope because *I* am the one - this has nothing to do with God - who has closed the door. And, going back to the image of sitting in the theater, I closed it simply by turning to the left and listening to the ego. I totally forgot there is a presence to my right. Not only did I turn to the left and listen to the ego's thought system, but I also took over the ego's chair. Since I abdicated the middle chair where I was sitting (the "choosing chair"), I then *become* the ego presence in the left chair and forget there is anything else. I not only forget that Jesus is sitting two seats away, but I also forget that there is a middle seat, my power to choose. I believe that once I have made the choice, I have *become* that choice, and there is no hope any more. Then the best I can do is somehow carve out a miserable and brief existence in this world that will give me some amount of happiness and freedom from pain; but I know that in the end, God is going to win because I am going to die. Thus, we all believe that the doorway back has been closed, and that there is no hope at all.

There is a wonderful parable in Kafka's book, *The Trial*, which is basically a book about hopelessness and despair—there is no hope anywhere. Kafka presents a tale about a man who stands before the Law, and he is there for a whole lifetime. He is waiting for the man standing in front of the door, like a clerk, to let him go through the open door. He waits and waits and gets older and older; his voice becomes more and more feeble. Finally the man is almost dead and he says to the man in front of the door, "What is going to happen?" The reply is, "Well, this door was just for you, and now I am going to close it." And that's it—the end of the story! It is not very happy, but Kafka wasn't a happy man. He understood well, on some deep level, the absolute hopelessness and despair of the ego system, but without knowing that there is a way out. There is no way out *within the system!* The ego tells us there is a door back to God, but we are never going to get to it, and finally that door is going to close. So there is nothing more than this ego thought system.

Again, I am the one who has abdicated that middle seat, and it is that middle seat that offers me the opportunity of choosing. The purpose of *A Course in Miracles* is to tell us that there is a choice, and that we are *not* that left-hand seat. That is only a thought we have chosen and identified with. But there is a part of our mind that chose it, and that part is still active and can choose again. Thus, the idea of *A Course in Miracles* is to put us back in the middle seat, and then to have us turn to the right, which will not mean instant death - which is what the ego tells us it means—but rather will be our salvation. That is what gratitude is for. Gratitude means we are grateful we were wrong. There is a line that says, "Do you prefer that you be right or happy?" (T-29.VII.1:9). We all want to be right! To be right means to sit in the ego's chair and become that thought system, which tells us that we now understand the meaning of everything and how to deal with it. We understand all the problems and all solutions in the world; we know the difference between what is right and what is wrong; we know what is best for everyone else, including ourselves!

Gratitude, then, can be expressed in acknowledging that I was wrong and that it is okay that I was wrong, because knowing that means I can be happy. Again, if God's Will for me is perfect happiness, then that is the guarantee. If I go back to my rightful place in that middle chair and regain the power of my mind to choose, then I can make another choice. This time, however, I will not decide on my own; I will decide with the Love of the Holy Spirit next to me. The gratitude, to state it again, is for the movie theater itself, because it is the movie theater and looking at what is going on on the screen, which is my life here, that offers me the opportunity of making another choice. Therefore, I am grateful for that loving presence next to me who makes that choice with me.

*A Course in Miracles* offers us a way out of the insanity of the ego. It is not even necessary to believe everything the Course says. All that is necessary is that we try to do what it is asking us to do, which is to forgive and to change our mind about our perception of the circumstances and relationships in our lives. Once we begin to practice that, we will realize that it really works. We do feel better if we let go of judgments and our belief that we are right and everyone else is wrong. We do feel better as we begin to develop a sense of gratitude. We are then reinforced by how much better we feel, and then we continue to do it more and more.