

## Our Gratitude to God

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
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### Part XIII

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

**(9:1-2) Today we learn to think of gratitude in place of anger, malice and revenge.** [All these go hand in hand with the thought system of the ego.] **We have been given everything.**

That is the truth. Remember, the thought system of the ego begins with the idea that we have not been given everything—that God lied: He said He gave us everything, but He did not give us everything. He gave us everything except the ability to be prime Creator, and that is not fair. From that basic perception of lack, a whole thought system emerged, which is one of lack. Once we believe we are lacking, we feel that someone has deprived us of it, and then we have to get it. In this world, that manifests itself as the perception: I am missing something; you are the one who has it, so I am now justified in attacking you for it.

**(9:3) If we refuse to recognize it, we are not entitled therefore to our bitterness, and to a self-perception which regards us in a place of merciless pursuit, where we are badgered ceaselessly, and pushed about without a thought or care for us or for our future.**

Recognizing the idea that we have everything as God's Child and that the abundance of God is within us is our responsibility. If we refuse to recognize this idea, we are not justified in feeling bitter about it. Jesus is not saying that we cannot feel that way if we want to; he is simply saying it is not justified. If I am feeling that something is missing in my life and that is not right, I am not justified in believing that you are the one who took it from me. If I feel that way, I am the author of my self and I am the author of those feelings. From that point—a feeling that there is something missing—I then believe that people in the world are out to get me. This is a powerful description of paranoia—that the world and the people in it are mercilessly pursuing me, that they are hellbent on my destruction and are continually badgering me, pushing me around, and do not care about me.

All this must follow from the belief that there is something missing in us. If there is something missing in us and we do not accept responsibility for that lack, then we must conclude that someone took it from us, which means someone is out to get us. That automatically leads to this feeling of paranoia, and everyone in this world shares in that feeling. As you read through the Course's account of the ego thought system, you begin to see that it really is the thought system of a paranoid schizophrenic—not in a clinical sense, of course; but that is exactly what is being described, which means that we are all paranoid schizophrenics. The people whom we label paranoid schizophrenics are simply those who are a little more extreme.

The ego is insane and in repeatedly telling us how insane it is, Jesus means this very literally. One way of defining *insanity* is believing that something is there when it is not there, and that something is not

there when it is. That is exactly what we have done. We keep saying Heaven is not here; Heaven is non-existent. Even though Heaven is indeed here, we say and believe that this world is here and real, when in fact there is no world here. It is simply a magic trick, a "vast illusion" as the Course describes time at one point (W-pl.158.4:1). That is what insanity is, and everyone here is insane; otherwise, none of us would be here. Again, our insanity is that we believe people are out to get us, when there is no one even out there who can get us, or the belief that God is out to get us when God does not even know we are gone. That is what paranoia is. That is why none of us is entitled to that feeling of bitterness. It does not mean that the feelings are not there, and Jesus is certainly not suggesting that we should deny any of those feelings. But we should at least recognize that they are not justified.

Similarly, the Course never says that we should not get angry. It makes the point that anger is not justified (M-17.8:6), but it does not say that we should not get angry, any more than it would say that we should not get sick. Obviously, we are going to get sick. The idea is that when we get sick, angry, or upset; when we feel unfairly treated, persecuted, and badgered ceaselessly, etc., that we recognize where those feelings are coming from—from within our own minds. They are not coming from anything else, because there is nothing else. Remember, you are the author of the film running through the projector. What you see on the screen and feel about what is on the screen is coming from you, *your* film; so you cannot blame anyone else for it. If you see a horror movie and feel upset, no one made you feel frightened. You made *you* frightened because there is nothing out there.

*A Course in Miracles* also teaches that this is what happens in our waking life. It is simply as if you are in a movie theater. If you get upset, there aren't any real people there threatening you or frightening you; it is only something that you are putting there. Not only is that true about an experience in a movie theater, but it is true of our experience in our waking life, which of course is not waking anyway. It is all part of the same dream.

**(9:4) Gratitude becomes the single thought we substitute for these insane perceptions.**

There is no way that we can feel grateful to another person and hold on to all these feelings. A paranoid person is not grateful; he is terrified. Therefore, if we can realize that feeling grateful is the way out of terror, then we would be fools not to feel grateful. The problem is that our experience is that gratitude is not the way out of terror, because the terror seems real. The way out of the terror seems to be to escape from it. Yet, we cannot escape from a situation that is not there. While we believe it is there and feel we must escape from it, we are only going to find it over and over again, because the situation we are trying to escape from is a *thought* within us. If we do not change that thought, it will always be present and be projected out, which means we will just have the same experience again and again. Thus, the experience of gratitude we feel is for the potential of circumstances, situations, or relationships to be classrooms that mirror back to us what is within us. We can recognize now that our anxiety is not a result of what others have done or what is out there, but of what is in ourselves. Then on top of that is the experience of gratitude for the loving Presence of the Holy Spirit or Jesus within us Who teaches us those lessons.

**(9:5-6) God has cared for us, and calls us Son. Can there be more than this?**

To the ego, yes, there is more than this, because the ego says God does not care about you—you disowned Him as a Father, He disowned you as a Son, and He no longer cares about you. All He wants to do is punish you. Therefore, the something-more-than-this is the terror of God, the guilt over what we

have done, and the need to have the world as a defense. To truly accept that God cares for us and calls us Son is to accept the Atonement principle.

**(10) Our gratitude will pave the way to Him, and shorten our learning time by more than you could ever dream of. Gratitude goes hand in hand with love, and where one is the other must be found. For gratitude is but an aspect of the Love which is the Source of all creation. God gives thanks to you, His Son, for being what you are; His Own completion and the Source of love, along with Him. Your gratitude to Him is one with His to you. For love can walk no road except the way of gratitude, and thus we go who walk the way to God.**

That is a lovely passage. What makes this so difficult for us to do is that there is a part of us that does not feel grateful and does not recognize the significance of gratitude, which is important at all three levels: (1) the level of gratitude to God for being our Source; (2) our gratitude to Jesus for reminding us of that, and finally, (3) gratitude for all the people in our lives, who end up being our teachers—not necessarily what they teach us on the level of form, but because of their capacity to be the mirror of what we have to unlearn within ourselves.

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I would like to read two paragraphs from the prose poem, "The Gifts of God," which is the last part of the book of Helen's poetry, *The Gifts of God*, p. 119. These paragraphs come in the form of a prayer from Jesus to God, similar to other prayers in *A Course in Miracles*. This is a lovely statement of gratitude that also brings together a number of themes we have talked about in this class on gratitude. The context is a section called "The Two Gifts" that contrasts the gifts of the ego with the gifts of God. The gifts of the ego are all the pain, the "bitter dreams," fear, etc., and the gifts of God is the gift of His Love. Basically it is the exchange of the gifts of fear for the gifts of God. Earlier in this section, Jesus is asking us to bring to him all these gifts of the ego. Once we bring them to him he can replace them with the gifts of God. The end of the section, the two paragraphs that I will read now, is Jesus talking to God on our behalf, instead of Jesus talking to us.

**Father, we thank You for these gifts that we have found together. Here we are redeemed. For it is here we joined, and from this place of holy joining we will come to You because we recognize the gifts You gave and would have nothing else. Each hand that finds its way to mine will take Your gifts from me, and as we look together on the place whereon I laid your worthless gifts for you, we will see nothing but the gifts of God reflected in the shining round our heads.**

Holy are we who know our holiness, for it is You Who shine Your light on us, and we are thankful, in Your ancient Name, that You have not forgotten. What we thought we made of You has merely disappeared, and with its going are the images we made of Your creation gone as well. And it is finished. For we now commend into Your Hands the spirit of Your Son who seemed to lose his way a little while but never left the safety of Your Love. The gifts of fear, the dream of death, are done. And we give thanks. And we give thanks, Amen.

That is a lovely passage. One of the major themes of the first part is the importance of joining with Jesus and turning to him for help to bring all of the ego's gifts of fear that we have. What allows this to happen is simply being able to look at what our ego is doing—to be aware of the lack of gratitude we feel toward the people in our lives, toward Jesus, and toward God. The very fact that we can look at all our

judgments, our anger, and our concerns openly, without being afraid of them and without condemning them, means that we are not looking through the eyes of the ego. The ego would never look. In fact, the whole ego system drew its strength and built itself up from our not looking at it. If we had looked at it, it would be so preposterous that we would simply smile it away. Instead what happened is we believed what the ego told us at the beginning—that we had separated from God, killed Him, and destroyed the unity of Heaven. From that point on, we never looked at it again. We just locked the Holy Spirit away in our mind, like in a darkened closet - what the Course at one point calls "a shrouded vault," "a darkened tomb"—and we never looked at it again. What heals and what undoes the ego is simply looking at it.

We have two possible choices: either we look through the eyes of the ego or we look through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. There is no in between. It is one or the other, and it must be one or the other. If I can truly look at what my ego is doing without being horrified by it, justifying it, or being ashamed of it, I could not be looking with my ego. The only alternative is the Holy Spirit, or the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, who would be Jesus.

Thus, when Jesus says, "**Father, we thank You for these gifts that we have found together. Here we are redeemed,**" he is talking about him and us. In that joining, when we take his hand—or in the image of the movie theater, when we turn to the right instead of to the left—we realize that we do have a choice. When we turn to the right, we ask his help that we look at the situation that is making us upset. That is all we have to do—just look at it. We do not have to change it outside or inside; we simply have to look at it. The very fact that we are willing to ask his help is a statement that we are willing, at least on some level, to let go of our investment in being right.

On our own, we would look at it and insist that we were right in concluding we were unfairly treated, and more than justified in holding on to our anger, wrath, resentment, hurt, bitterness, loneliness, fear, etc. By asking his help, we are saying we want to be happy and not right, and we want to look at it his way. At that moment we are redeemed. Learning to take his hand instead of the hand of the ego is what does it.

What built up the ego right at the beginning was not taking Jesus' hand, taking the ego's hand instead, and never questioning it again. Then it was that not only did we take the ego's hand, we *became* the ego—there was no difference between the ego thought system and ourselves. We abdicated that middle chair, where the decision maker is, and that chair became vacant. Because we turned to the ego, we became the ego, and then there was nothing else in our awareness.

When I find myself in a situation, my ego immediately says, replaying the ancient tapes: it is happening again: you cannot trust anyone—men, women, authority figures—everyone lies to you, steals from you, and deceives you. That is perfectly true in terms of the egos of the world. What else are egos going to do? That's no big deal. You are not surprised are you? What's new about that? What is new is that there is another way of looking at it. We can say, Yes, of course, that is what this person did because that person is a good healthy ego. Of course, that is the way I react because I am a good healthy ego. What else is new? It is no big deal. It should end up being very boring. Sometimes people say Heaven is boring because nothing happens. It should really be the other way around. The ego is boring because it is always the same thing, over and over; it does not change. The names, faces, and forms change, but the experience does not change. After a while we should get the idea. What is going on here is that it is just the same old stuff because we am always listening to the same old voice.

The one thing that can be said about the ego is that it is consistent. Similarly, the one good thing we can say about Adolf Hitler is that he was consistent. He did exactly what he said he would do, and he did it consistently. That is the ego thought system; it never changes. The forms change because it tries to disguise what it is doing, but it basically never changes. At some point, we realize something is wrong with this, and there must be another way of looking at it. That is when we begin the process of turning to the right instead of to the left. We now realize that there is a loving presence next to us whose hand we can take and whose love we can accept. That enables us to substitute his thought system for the ego's thought system. At that moment redemption occurs, because by joining with Jesus, we are joining with the Holy Spirit, which is the undoing of the original joining with the ego. It is from that place of joining that we come to God, "because we recognize the gifts You gave"—the You being God—**"and would have nothing else."**

Now what happened right at the beginning was that we did not recognize the gifts God gave, because God's gifts were the gifts of Love. We turned them around and the ego taught us that God's gifts were the gifts of vengeance, hatred, murder, and fear. Who would be grateful for gifts such as these? When we turn back to God and His gifts, we have nothing else—which means we have turned our back on the ego. We judge the ego's gifts and say they were not evil, sinful, wicked, or destructive—they were simply silly, and why should we hold on to something that is nothing, when we could have the gifts of everything?