

True Empathy

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Part III

Commentary on Lesson 92 (concluded)

(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 1) Strength overlooks these things by seeing past appearances.

"Strength," as we will see later on, is the strength of Christ, which basically means looking through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, or the eyes of Jesus—what the Course refers to as the vision of Christ or the perception of the Holy Spirit. The vision of Christ overlooks the things of the world by seeing past appearances, which means that we see what the world has made real and say, "But the problem is not there; the problem is in the mind."

Remember the fairy tale, *The Emperor's New Clothes*? Well, that is basically what this is saying. The Emperor has no clothes on. The problem is not all the terrible clothing that the body, the Emperor, has here. There are no clothes. In fact, there is no Emperor. The whole thing is made up. But in order for us to see that, we have to look. In the fairy tale the little boy looks at the Emperor with open eyes—not to please the Emperor or to do what the world says he should do—and says the Emperor has no clothes on. In other words, the whole thing is made up. That is what Jesus tries to get us to do in the Course: to look at the world and the suffering in the world and say it's all made up. There is nothing here.

In a passage near the end of Chapter 27, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit does not look to effects but looks to their cause (T-27.VIII.9:1). We have judged the effects; He has judged the cause. We look to all the effects (let me put the word "effect" here on the chart), to what has come from the mind, and therefore judge effects. We say some effects are good, some are bad, some are pleasurable, some are painful, some are holy, some are unholy, some are alive, some are dead. We make a hierarchy of illusions, which is the first law of chaos, and we judge among them. The Holy Spirit does not look to effects. He does not deal with the world. He looks to the cause. The cause is the mind that chose to identify with the ego instead of with Him. The cause of all the suffering and pain in the world is believing that the "tiny, mad idea" is something serious. The Holy Spirit looks at the "tiny, mad idea," smiles and says, "Isn't that silly? It is nothing more than a silly dream." At that point the whole thing disappears. The Holy Spirit does not look to the appearances, but goes beyond them.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 2-4) It [The Holy Spirit's strength] keeps its steady gaze upon the light that lies beyond them. It unites with light of which it is a part. It sees itself.

This is an expression of the "Greater Joining" (T-28.IV), which we will talk about later when we do that section. What this means for us is that—and I'm getting a little ahead of what we are talking about now—when I find myself getting trapped, I am seeing through the eyes of the ego. I know I'm trapped when I make some aspect of the physical or psychological world real—I take something here seriously; I feel there is a problem outside that has to be corrected or someone out here who has to be helped and

I'm the one who is going to do it or see that it is done, and that becomes my motivation. I am seeing through the eyes of the ego, which means I am seeing through the eyes of darkness, because I am seeing something that is literally not here. There is no problem here.

When I do get trapped, the Holy Spirit asks me to choose a miracle instead of the grievance or the projection of the ego—which is the whole message of the Course. This means I go back to that place in my mind where I had seemingly joined with the darkness of the ego against the light of the Holy Spirit, and now I change my mind. When I do that I join with the light, and look at the world through that light. I look at the world through Christ's vision, through the eyes of strength. Now I see—not people in pain, physically or emotionally, not some problem in the world—I see others calling out for the Love of God that they believe they have separated from and which they believe they will never, ever more rejoin. That is what I see.

This does not mean that, on a behavioral level, I don't do something for someone in the world. It means that if I do, I don't do it out of weakness or pity. I don't do it out of feeling sorry for the person. I do it because I am answering that person's call for love on the level that that person can accept it. Whenever anybody is in pain, that person is saying, "I have turned the Love of God into an enemy, and I am being punished. I now need a happy dream which ends that pain." And so I join with that person seemingly to end the physical pain, which I may have the power to do. But what I am really doing by ending another's physical pain is giving a message that says God is not angry at you, and by my love and my peace I am reflecting for you the love and peace that is inside you. Just as I was able to make a choice not to make your error real, not to make guilt or sin real, so can you make the same choice. On the level of form or behavior I may do exactly what someone else does, but my motivation will be different. I will be doing it from a place of strength, not weakness. It is not my heart that goes out to you; it is the light in my mind that calls to the light in your mind. It is not that I identify with your weakness. The strength of Christ in me calls to your mind to make the same choice I did, which is to join with the strength of Christ in you. That is the joining. I do not join with you on the level of the body. That is not joining. I join with you in my mind, which means part of my mind is able to look beyond the appearances and sees whatever is going on in this world as an expression of the call for the Love of God that you believe you have separated from. This is an idea that we will come back to over and over again.

So the light sees itself. There is no experience then of separation. My body's eyes see you as separate; but when my mind is healed, I realize that the light of Christ shines in you, just as it shines in me, despite the appearances of the ego's darkness.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 4-6) It [the light] sees itself. It brings the light in which your Self appears. In darkness you perceive a self that is not there.

The Holy Spirit becomes the memory of our reality as Christ, the reminder of Who we are as Christ, the real Self. "In darkness" refers to our turning away from the light of the Holy Spirit and identifying with the ego thought system. Remember, when we chose the ego we *became* the ego. At that point we identify with a sinful, separated self that is literally not there, because we never left home. If I identify with a limited, separated self in my mind, I identify with all the limited, separated selves in the world. Some I identify with—these are the people I join with, my special love partners. Some I identify against, because I see in them something I do not want to see in myself. In all cases I am joining with someone and something that is literally not there.

(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 7) Strength is the truth about you; weakness is an idol falsely worshipped and adored that strength may be dispelled, and darkness rule where God appointed that there should be light.

That is exactly what the ego has done—substitute itself for God. In the image that I mentioned earlier, the little imperceptible ripple or wave believes it is the ocean but it does not have the power of the ocean. It is absolutely nothing, just as a little sunbeam does not have the power of the sun. But the sunbeam believes in its arrogance that it is the sun, and the ripple believes in its arrogance that it is the ocean. We hold up a match and believe we are literally the light of the world—that we, this little match, give the sun all of its light. The ego believes it has stolen the strength of God, so that God does not have it and the ego now has it. Then the ego makes up a dream in which it is king. "Look what I can do. I can make up a world. I can make up a body." In one version, the ego says, "I am greater than God because I can destroy what I have made. God cannot do that."

The ego, in its upside-down insanity, makes itself stronger than God, Who does not have the power to destroy what He created. But the ego does. The ego builds bombs and all kinds of weapons, and says, "Look how strong I am!" Listen to the words of President Bush about the Persian Gulf, when he was flexing his muscles and telling Hussein, "Look what I can do. Look at all the power that I have. Fifty thousand troops are not enough; a hundred thousand, two-hundred thousand are not enough. We are going to show you how strong we are."

We are not telling Hussein how strong we are; we are telling *God* how strong we are. The ego always tries to show how strong and powerful it is—how great its strength is. This is what the world, egos, and bodies are always doing to hide the fact that we really are an insignificant nothing. The ego knows that. While the ego does not know about the Love of God or the strength of God, because that is beyond its reality, it does know on some level there is a power greater than itself. That is the power of our minds to choose. That is what the ego is afraid of. It is really not afraid of God, because it doesn't know about God. What it is really afraid of is the power of the Son of God's mind to choose, because the power of the ego does not come from itself. It literally has no power. The ego's seeming power comes from the Son of God who identifies with it. When we withdraw our belief in the ego, the ego literally vanishes. As the Course explains, again, the ego disappears back into the nothingness from which it came (M-13.1:2).

The seeming power of terror, of self-hatred, of murder, of pain, is not within the fear, pain, terror or guilt; the power comes from our *belief* in that thought system. That is extremely important. Pain does not come from the body, no matter how powerful or painful it may be—and we all know how painful the body can feel at times. The pain does not come from the body, the pain comes from our *belief* in it. Jesus is quoted as saying in the gospel, "All power in Heaven and earth is given unto me." We have that same power. It is the power in the mind.

We are guilty over our minds because we believe that the power and strength in our minds came from stealing; we stole it from God. When we are in our right minds, we realize that power is the reflection of God's Love. The purpose of the Holy Spirit and Jesus is to be a reminder in our minds that we have all power.

Workbook Lesson 253 says, "My Self is ruler of the universe." My mind contains within it the power of the universe of Christ, but my mind also contains within it the pseudo-power of the ego's universe. The world is simply the mirror of what is in our minds. We take the littleness and the weakness of the ego,

project it out and make a body that is inherently weak because it is going to deteriorate and eventually die. Then we try to minister to the body, which is the ego trying to sustain and nourish and comfort itself. This just keeps the whole illusion that there is an ego.

Let me go back now to Lesson 92. What this lesson is reflecting is the difference between the strength of Christ's vision and the weakness of the ego's perceptions. The ego, which is basically a thought of weakness, suffering, guilt, and of pain and death, automatically gives rise to a perception of the world in that way. Our true strength lies in the presence of the Holy Spirit in the mind. When we look through His eyes, join with His thinking, and identify with His mind, we look out and see strength all over. Not that the body necessarily is strong, but we recognize in every seeming pain in the world a call for the strength of God that is underneath it. That will be a major theme of what we will be talking about next.

I'll begin reading from the fifth paragraph and go almost to the end of the lesson.

(Paragraphs 5-10) Strength comes from truth, and shines with light its Source has given it; weakness reflects the darkness of its maker. It is sick and looks on sickness, which is like itself. Truth is a savior and can only will for happiness and peace for everyone. It gives its strength to everyone who asks, in limitless supply. It sees that lack in anyone would be a lack in all. And so it gives its light that all may see and benefit as one. Its strength is shared, that it may bring to all the miracle in which they will unite in purpose and forgiveness and in love.

Weakness, which looks in darkness, cannot see a purpose in forgiveness and in love. It sees all others different from itself, and nothing in the world that it would share. It judges and condemns, but does not love. In darkness it remains to hide itself, and dreams that it is strong and conquering, a victor over limitations that but grow in darkness to enormous size.

It fears and it attacks and hates itself, and darkness covers everything it sees, leaving its dreams as fearful as itself. No miracles are here, but only hate. It separates itself from what it sees, while light and strength perceive themselves as one. The light of strength is not the light you see. It does not change and flicker and go out. It does not shift from night to day, and back till the morning comes again.

The light of strength is constant, sure as love, forever glad to give itself away, because it cannot give but to itself. No one can ask in vain to share its sight, and none who enters its abode can leave without a miracle before his eyes, and strength and light abiding in his heart.

The strength in you will offer you the light, and guide your seeing so you do not dwell on idle shadows that the body's eyes provide for self-deception. Strength and light unite in you, and where they meet, your Self stands ready to embrace you as Its Own. Such is the meeting place we try today to find and rest in, for the peace of God is where your Self, His Son, is waiting now to meet Itself again, and be as one.

Let us give twenty minutes twice today to join this meeting. Let yourself be brought unto your Self. Its strength will be the light in which the gift of sight is given you. Leave, then, the dark a little while today, and we will practice seeing in the light, closing the body's eyes and asking truth to show us how to find the meeting place of self and Self, where light and strength are one.

One of the major themes that we will be talking about is joining, what it is, and what it is not. The end of this workbook lesson discusses this. To the ego joining always means joining with itself. We discussed

how in the original ontological instant when the decision maker had to make his choice, he joined with the ego instead of with the Holy Spirit. From that joining, which is really a pseudo-joining, because it is joining with nothing, the whole world is made. We continually join with this limited and separated self that is the ego. In the world, the limited and separated self is no longer in the mind but is in the body, and so joining for us in the world is joining with other people. There is an important line in the text that says "minds are joined; bodies do not" (T-18.VI.3:1). Bodies do not join. When we find ourselves in sympathy and empathizing with people who are in pain, or identifying with a particular group against another group, we are identifying and joining with their bodies. That is not joining, because we are joining with an illusion. We are joining with weakness instead of strength.

In true joining, we change our minds and move away from the ego and back to the Holy Spirit. That is the meeting place that the lesson talked about, the meeting place of the little "s" self with the capital "S" Self. The capital "S" Self is represented for us in the dream by the Holy Spirit, Who reminds us of the Self we are as Christ. The little "s" self is the self that believes in separation. When the decision maker moves away from identifying with the ego self and begins to move towards the Holy Spirit, that is the meeting place. The meeting place is within the mind, the decision-making part of the mind that chooses to identify and join with the Holy Spirit. When we join with Him there is no separation. As we said earlier, the ego believes in separation, difference, judgment, and attack, and they all are virtually the same thing. In fact, not only virtually, they *are* the same thing. When we join with the Holy Spirit we are joining with the unity of God and Christ. We are joining with the love of Heaven that has no division or differentiation to it. Then when we peer out into the dream we no longer experience differences or separation. As I mentioned earlier, whatever is on the film that is running through the projector in the movie theater is exactly and identically what we perceive on the screen. So, too, when we join in the mind with the Holy Spirit, which is joining with the unity of Christ, we experience unity and love on the screen of our lives, in the world. It does not mean the body's eyes will not perceive differences, but the differences will make no difference. In other words, the Love of God that we are now identifying with is totally unaffected by the seeming differences that the body's eyes perceive.

That is what Jesus means in the passage at the end of Chapter 15, which was written at New Year's time as a kind of New Year's prayer: "Make this year different by making it all the same" (T-15.XI.10:11). In other words, don't make differences real. Chapter 15 is the first place in the text where Jesus discusses special relationships. And the hallmark of specialness is differences: You are different from me, you have something that I want, and I want to get it from you. When we join with the Holy Spirit or with Jesus in the mind, we no longer experience differences. If we no longer experience a difference between ourselves and the Love of God, it is impossible to experience any real difference out here in the world. We do not see people as separate and different from us, and therefore we make no judgments against them and we don't attack.

"The Greater Joining"—the title of the section we will look at later—is this joining of Christ with Himself, or the joining of Christ with God. We do that first in the mind, and automatically the vision and unity and experience of love extend through us into the dream, and we no longer experience people as different from us. No matter how mangled their bodies may be, no matter how much in pain they are, no matter how terrible their situations are, we do not experience ourselves as different from them. We will go into all that in more depth later on.