**Our Gratitude to God**

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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**Part I
Introduction**

This theme, "Our Gratitude to God," is one of the nicest themes we ever deal with in our classes—a little nicer than the laws of chaos, special relationships, or other such themes. I will divide this topic into three sections. The first is our gratitude to God: what it means to be grateful to God, as well as to accept His gratitude to us. The second is our gratitude to Jesus as well as his gratitude to us and our acceptance of it. And the third is the gratitude that *A Course in Miracles*asks us to feel towards each other, which, really is the means whereby we remember Who we are as God's children. It is through accepting our gratitude to each other that we learn to accept our gratitude to God. We will be discussing three workbook lessons that deal primarily with gratitude.

As an introduction, I want to talk about the idea of gratitude itself. Gratitude is unknown in Heaven. Similar to forgiveness, the miracle, and salvation, gratitude is part of the illusory world. Obviously, you do not feel gratitude toward someone unless you experience yourself as separate from that person. Gratitude can only be part of the dualistic world, which means that it plays no part in Heaven, which is totally unified. When the Course talks about our feeling grateful to God, what it is really talking about is the undoing or the correction of the *ingratitude* we feel toward Him, just as forgiveness is the correction for the unforgiveness we feel. When forgiveness comes to replace all of the unforgiveness in our minds, then the ego dream disappears, and eventually the split mind disappears. Then we awaken to the reality of God, Whom we never left. Gratitude is the same thing. When we can truly experience our gratitude to God for creating us, our gratitude to Jesus for helping us remember God, and finally our gratitude for all the people and circumstances in our lives, then the need for gratitude disappears. As with everything else in *A Course in Miracles*, we are really talking about the undoing of what the ego has done.

**Gratitude to God**

Let me talk first about the ego's ingratitude to God, and then what gratitude means in that context. We feel grateful to God for having been our Creator and our Source. What the ego did right at the beginning when the thought of separation first entered the mind of God's Son was to see itself as separated from God, with God now its rival. Rather than feeling grateful to God for being the Source of the Son, the Son now looked at God and felt that what God had done was not fair—God was the Creator, and the Son of God was the created. Thus, rather than being grateful to God for Who He is and for the love that created us, we felt angry about it and turned away from Him. Basically, the position of the ego is not that it was ungrateful, but rather that God did nothing deserving of gratitude. The ego, then, would not feel ingratitude, but rather that gratitude was not justified or warranted for the simple reason that the ego decided it did not need God, and that it could be on its own. That basic response of the ego to God the Creator is what is filtered down through the consciousness of us all. Thus, the lack of gratitude we feel toward our experiences in this world stems directly from that feeling of lack of gratitude toward God. The basic idea, again, is: why should I feel grateful to you, or for what have you done for me? I do not need you because I can act on my own. Gratitude is an experience of humility that comes from the fact that I need you, not in the specialness sense of needing you to complete me or to fill certain lacks in me. It is a need that recognizes that you are a part of me, and if I do not recognize that, then I will not remember who I am, because the Son of God is perfectly unified. A lack of gratitude is basically a way of perpetuating the separation system.

Likewise, our feeling of ingratitude towards Jesus is also born of the same idea: who needs you?—I can do this on my own! This would hold not only for Jesus, but for the Holy Spirit or any name we give to the presence of God's Love in our mind. *A Course in Miracles* simply stops with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but it really does not matter what name you give to that presence. The basic idea, again, is that *I can do this on my own—I don't need you*. I do not need you as my brother or sister in Christ; I do not need an internal teacher who reminds me of who I am; and I certainly do not need a God Who claims that He created me, when I know that I am the one who created myself. Thus, right at the very start of the ego's thought system, the separation dream, we find the denial of gratitude. This is why gratitude is such a major theme in the Course. You will be astounded at how many times the words *gratitude, grateful, thankfulness*, and *thanks* appear in all three books. I will just cite a couple of those references. The point, as we shall see, is that God does not need our gratitude; in fact, God does not even know that we are ungrateful.

The Bible repeatedly states that you should praise God. This hardly means that you should tell Him how wonderful He is. He has no ego with which to accept such praise, and no perception with which to judge it 4.VII.6:1-3).

Chapter 6 of the text says basically is the same thing, except now Jesus is not only talking about God, but about himself as well.

I do not need gratitude, but you need to develop your weakened ability to be grateful, or you cannot appreciate God. He does not need your appreciation, but *you* do. You cannot love what you do not appreciate, for fear makes appreciation impossible. When you are afraid of what you are you do not appreciate it, and will therefore reject it. As a result, you will teach rejection (T-6.I.17).

The Course teaches that we are all afraid of God. The ego tells us that because of our terrible sin against Him—separating and usurping His place on the throne—He will punish us. So how can we feel grateful to a Being Who we believe is hellbent on our destruction? The point of this is that God does not need our gratitude; Jesus does not need our gratitude; but *we need the experience of gratitude to Them*. We need each other's gratitude, because we still believe that we are egos, and we still believe that we do not deserve gratitude. To express gratitude and love to Jesus or to God is not for Their benefit, clearly, but for ours, as it is the correction or the undoing of the ingratitude, the lack of appreciation we feel for Them. Again, any experience that we have in this world of not feeling appreciative or grateful stems directly from that idea: who do you think you are that I should feel appreciative of what you have done or be grateful for who you are?

Every single negative experience we have, whether it is ingratitude, anger, guilt, fear, shame, anxiety, etc. all stem, without exception, from the original separation thought. Therefore, each day, each minute, and each instant we but relive the time when terror took the place of love (T-26.V.13:1). We are continually reliving that original instant, which is the only instant there ever was, even though we believe time is real. In reality, of course, time is simultaneous. We relive that original instant when we believe we stole from God and felt perfectly justified in doing so. Feeling grateful to God for creating us is, to the ego, the arrogance of God; certainly not the arrogance of the ego itself. From the ego's point of view, it is arrogant of God to demand that we be grateful to Him. From that moment, then, terror arose, because we became afraid that our hatred of God was going to be returned to us from Him, and that would mean our instant destruction. That is the fear that everyone holds deep within. Again, the root cause of all the feelings of ingratitude that we have, and all the lack of appreciation that we feel, stems directly from that arrogance of the ego that says I can be on my own; I do not need anyone else.

Another way, therefore, of talking about the separation from God and the beginning of the thought system of the ego is the idea that *I can do things on my own*. We believe that we are self-created rather than God created. Once I believe I am a physical/psychological self, whose origins and beginnings are independent of God and are only of this world, an experience of gratitude to God makes no sense at all. Why should I be grateful to Someone Who has nothing whatsoever to do with me? One of the major purposes of *A Course in Miracles* is to help us recognize and remember that God has *everything* to do with us—not with this ego self that we believe we are—but with Who we are as Christ. Our gratitude to God, therefore, simply is the awareness, remembrance, and recognition of Who we are as God's child. The dawning of that memory is the end of the ego, which is the thought that we are on our own.

One of the ideals of our society is what people call self-made persons, those who have done it all by themselves without help, or in spite of the lack of help that they have received. This ties in with the ego thought system that we are self-made and do not need God or anyone else. But, as the Course explains, when it comes to the people we do believe we need—our special love partners—we hate them most of all, because they remind us that this idea that we are on our own is a myth, that we cannot sustain ourselves on our own. There is a part of us that knows we cannot survive without outside help, and therefore we hate those who become symbols of that. We hate ourselves because of that weakness. Then there is a part of us that hates God, Who does not, or will not, fix it all for us.

Some people think of themselves not as self-created, but rather as a kind of biological accident. They feel that the world presents tangible evidence in support of that, whereas there is not much tangible evidence in support of God as Creator. This is really everyone's experience on one level or another, and it points out the clever job the ego did, because as we know, the entire physical world was made as a way of keeping hidden from us the memory of where we came from. (To go into this in any depth would require another workshop, so I will be brief here.) Since we all believe that we are part of this world, that we are bodies, and that other bodies made us, then there is no place for God. That is what *A Course in Miracles* means when it says that not only was the world made "as an attack on God," but that it was also "meant to be a place where God could enter not" (W-pII.3.2:1,4). The ego uses that as proof that its position is correct. However, the only witnesses that the ego calls to its defense are the witnesses that *it* made: the body and the world. It never allows us to think, even of the possibility, that there is another witness, because that other witness, the Holy Spirit, is in our mind. And the mind is the last thing the ego ever lets us look at. The part of us that thinks about issues such as evolution and accidents of nature is the brain, and the brain is simply part of the body and of the ego system. Thus, the Course asks us to consider why we ask the one thing in all the universe that does not know what reality is to tell us what it is (T-20.III.7:5-7). That is what we are always doing—asking the body, our sensory organs, our brain, etc., to investigate and tell us what our reality is.

The evidence for another source of creation cannot be found in the world, at least not in terms of how the body would see it. The evidence and argument that the Course presents is basically Jesus asking us to look at what we have done and realize that nothing has ever worked, so why not give him a chance? Combining two lines from different places in the Course, he says, "Resign as your own teacher, for you have been badly taught." (T-12.V.8:3; T-28.I.7:1). His point is that even if you do not believe in what I am saying, why not at least give it a shot, because what you have done has been an abysmal failure. If you look openly at what your life has been, as well as the lives of everyone else, both in your personal world and in the history of the world, it is obvious that this does not work. In a sense, then, the only reasonable question or statement you can make is that *there must be another way*, because this way does not work. That is how the Course started, and that, basically, is what the witness is.

At the end of the Introduction to the workbook, Jesus says that we will find many of the ideas in this course difficult; we will resist many of them; we will not like some; and some we will want to attack. But none of that matters, he assures us. We do not have to believe in any of it. We need simply do what he tells us to do. The doing of the exercises will show that the ideas on which they are based are true (W-in.8). That is what the witnesses would be: if I really do practice what the Course says and I forgive—or in the context of this workshop, if I allow myself to feel gratitude—then I will feel much more peaceful. If I am really being open and honest with myself, I will realize that the peace I am feeling, because I have joined with you and forgiven you, is a much deeper peace than all the things that I have labeled peace up to now.

In one sense, you have to say that acceptance of what *A Course in Miracles* says and the commitment to at least practice what it is saying is an expression of faith—faith in something that you cannot see, that your brain cannot understand, that you cannot hear with your ears, but faith that there is something else that is beyond this body and this physical self. The Course does not ask us to believe what it says simply because it says it. Jesus is saying, "believe what I am telling you because it will work for you; it will make you happier." He appeals to the purely selfish part of our nature: namely, that we are not happy now, but if we practice these principles we will feel happy and more peaceful, maybe not right away, but in the long run we will.

Our personal experience thus becomes our own witness The feeling of peace and happiness within ourselves is the witness. And the awareness, Jesus tells us in the Course, is that you will see the miracles that are done through you, but will realize that you have not done them—something in you must have done them (see, for example, T-16.II.2). Most of us have had an experience that somehow, all of a sudden, something feels different. It is not necessarily that the outer circumstances or the world changes, but something in me feels different. I know I am not the one who did it, but something in me must have done it, because it happened in me. That "something" would be the presence of the Holy Spirit or Jesus. It does not matter whether one identifies that loving or peaceful presence with a specific name—the experience is authentic.

**Part II
Gratitude to Jesus**

I will give a brief presentation about Jesus now and then later discuss in greater depth our gratitude to him. He makes it clear at the beginning of the text that our fear of God is so great and the seeming distance between ourselves and Him so immense that return to Him seems impossible (T-1.II.4:3). In a different context later in the text, he says that it is not possible to go from the nightmare terrors that we all experience in this world directly to God or to Heaven (T-27.VII.13:4-5). The essence of the nightmare Jesus is talking about is that God will get us and destroy us. So what we need are intermediate steps, what the Course calls happy dreams, whereby we still believe we are here, but the dreams now become filled with forgiveness instead of attack and judgment. We do not jump right into God's Arms from an experience of being totally on our own and believing that He is the enemy or even that He does not exist. We need a middle ground, and being that middle ground is the function of the Holy Spirit or Jesus.

The Course uses Jesus and the Holy Spirit interchangeably in terms of Their role as our inner Teacher. We can speak of Jesus, as the Course does, as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit; and so Jesus and the Holy Spirit can be thought of as synonyms for each other on the level of function. We need Jesus as an intermediary because the distance between ourselves and God is so great. He asks us to imagine this as on a vertical continuum, a line that goes up and down, and that God is at the top, we are at the bottom, and he stands in between (T-1.II.6). An image he gave Helen, which is not part of the Course itself but is relevant here, is that his hands are in the sky and his feet are on the ground. In a sense, he bridges the gap between ourselves and God, as a Son of God between himself and God, and as an elder brother, between him and ourselves. This is one of the major themes of A Course in Miracles, and is an integral part of its process. The only way we can truly forgive and change our mind about each other, ourselves, and our relationship with God is with his or the Holy Spirit's help. The belief that we can do it without him is nothing more than the reflection of the original thought the Son had with God: "I can do it without You. I don't need You. I am smart enough and inwardly strong enough. I can do this without Your help!" That is why this is such an important theme.

At the end of the teacher's manual, in the section called "As For the Rest..." (M-29), we are reminded of the importance of asking the Holy Spirit for help—that this is the way out of hell for us, the way to escape from guilt. What we do with the Holy Spirit is a reflection of what we believe we did with God. If I believe that I have separated from God, then I must also believe that my salvation depends on my continuing to separate from Him. This means that that Presence of Love in my mind is seen as a threat and that I must remain separate from It. Then my experience would be that I do not have to ask Him for help, that I can do everything my way, as in the famous Frank Sinatra song.

The reason that asking the Holy Spirit's help is the way out of guilt is that it can remind us that we do not have to be separate, and that to ask Him for help is not an insult to our intelligence, inner strength, or to our mind. It is an expression of strength. The Course explains how the ego always gets humility and arrogance reversed. What the ego thinks is humble is really arrogant; and what it thinks is arrogant is really humble. It is not arrogant to believe that God's Love is present within us, but it is arrogant to believe that we can be separate from Him. There is a wonderful line in the text that says, "Be humble before Him, and yet great in Him" (T-15.IV.3:1). Being humble before God is the reminder that He is the One Who created us; we did not create Him. Yet, we are great in Him because our Identity is Christ. We should then be grateful to God, because it is His greatness, His love, His Self that we share. Thus, to deny the importance of our personal relationship with the Holy Spirit or Jesus is the exact same mistake as denying our relationship with God.

The Course teaches that it is not necessary to get back in touch with that original moment when terror took the place of love, as that is much too fearful for us, and not really necessary. Our experience within the dream and the separated mind that we identify with as our self is that there is a loving Presence within, and that we can make the same choice with that loving Presence that we did right at the original moment. If I can choose to see the Holy Spirit or Jesus as my Friend, and turn to His love for support, comfort, and help, then what I am really doing is choosing the instant of love taking the place of terror. Two things occurred in that original ontological moment: terror seemed to take the place of love, and the ego thought system was born. Then, by the Holy Spirit's Presence in our mind, love took the place of terror. Since both are fully present in our mind, we then have the choice.

The ego taught us at the beginning that we should not be grateful for the Holy Spirit's Presence in our mind, but rather for its presence, because the ego now is who we are. The ego is this voice that speaks of total freedom. It tells us that we are now finally free from that tyrant God—we are on our own and can now do our own thing. We can make up the world exactly as we want to, which is what we proceeded to do, and now we are on our own. Therefore, we should be grateful to the ego, because it is the ego that will save us from the wrath of God. The loving Presence of the Holy Spirit in our mind, we are now taught, is not a Presence we should be grateful to or for, but rather a Presence we should avoid. The ego tells us that the Holy Spirit really is God's general, Whom He has dispatched into our mind to capture us and bring us back to God under the guise of loving us, but He really wants to bring us back to God so He will destroy us.

A Course in Miracles explains that it was at this point that love turned into fear, and fear turned into love. In other words, we grew to be afraid of the true Presence of Love in our mind and became attracted to the presence of fear instead. The ego taught us that fear is what will save us. So the loving Presence of God in our mind, which we should feel grateful for, we now think we have no reason to feel grateful for, because after all, the Holy Spirit is the enemy, not our friend. The ego's hate, sin, guilt, and fear are certainly not what we should be grateful for; yet, according to its warped insanity these now become our friends, protectors, and allies. And we will put upon Jesus, who in the Western world is the greatest symbol of God's Love, all of the thoughts and feelings we have towards God. There is a part of us that loves him and yearns to go back home with him, and yet the other part of us believes he is our enemy, and that to follow him means instant death.

That explains why it is so difficult for us in this world to feel grateful to Jesus. There is a part of our mind that is insane, and yet very real to us, that believes that to take his hand and follow him home means the end of us. Christianity has taught for almost two thousand years that if you take the hand of Jesus and go back home, things might end up okay; but in the interim, you are going to have to suffer, sacrifice, and give up things. The more blood you shed, the better Jesus likes it, not to mention God. Thus, the theology that arose from the life of Jesus quickly turned into the theology of the ego. As a result, while it would be considered sacrilegious to feel ungrateful to Jesus—because, look what he has done for us!—there is a part of our mind that feels absolutely no gratitude to him; and indeed, we feel justified in staying as far away from him as possible.

There are a number of ways of maintaining distance between Jesus and ourselves. One way, of course, is simply to deny him and pretend that he or any other symbol of God's Love is not there. A more subtle way is to believe in him but change the meaning of his life, which is what Christians have done for centuries. Thus, rather than being a true savior of love and peace, he becomes a savior who represents guilt, sacrifice, suffering, and division. That is what A Course in Miracles means when it says, "Some bitter idols have been made of him who would be only brother to the world" (C-5.5:7). Once we believe in these bitter idols—for Christians he is a symbol of suffering and sacrifice; for Jews he is a symbol of persecution and victimhood—then we have no reason to feel grateful to him. That is why his presence in the Course is so primary.

Often, people ask why, if the message of A Course in Miracles is universal, is it Christian in its language, and Jesus is so prominent. What is the big deal about him being the author, and why does he talk about himself so much? Well, Jesus has been the Western world's greatest symbol of God's Love, and terribly misunderstood. All the projections we have placed upon God we also have placed upon him. We really cannot know God in this world, but we can know Jesus, so his forgiveness becomes extremely important. He does not need our forgiveness, because he does not have an ego that needs to experience that from us. But we need that forgiveness. In a number of places he says that he needs us to forgive him; otherwise, he cannot help us (see, for example, T-19.IV-B.6-8; T-20.II.4). The unforgiveness we experience toward him then becomes a block, and it interferes not only with his love for us, but also with our awareness of God's Love for us.

**Part III
Gratitude to Jesus (conclusion)**

Let us now look at the section in the teachers manual that answers the question, "Does Jesus Have a Special Place in Healing?"

**(M-23.4:1-2) The name of Jesus Christ as such is but a symbol. But it stands for love that is not of this world.**

To say that Jesus is a symbol does not mean that he is unreal, at least certainly not in this world. We are also symbols—of fear, separation, and guilt. Jesus, however, not having an ego, now becomes a symbol of love. So to speak of Jesus as a symbol is not to say that he is any less real than we are. None of us is real on one level, obviously. But since we believe that the world is real and that our physical/psychological self is real, then within that reality, within that dream, we andJesus are real. The difference is that we are a symbol of fear, guilt, and attack, and he is a symbol of love, forgiveness, and peace.

**(M-23.4:3) It is a symbol that is safely used as a replacement for the many names of all the gods to which you pray.**

The word gods is lowercase; and the gods to which we pray are all of our experiences of specialness—all the idols. These idols can be abstract, like fame and power; or tangible, like money; or even more specific, like people—all the things and people that we believe we need to save us. These are the little gods that we have made. The dictionary defines idol as "anything that is a substitute for God." Thus, all of our specialness is nothing more than a substitute for the Love of God. It is the egos way of saying to God, "You cannot meet my need; You cannot make me happy or peaceful, but this special person can." If this special person loves me, then that is all that I need—getting that special persons love is Heaven. I do not need anyone else, and I certainly do not need God or Jesus. But this also works with specialness things that are not positive such as addictions. Thus, alcoholics would feel that the only way they can cope with the extreme anxiety and pain in their lives is to drink, because neither God nor Jesus will do anything to help; but this bottle, this drug, or whatever the substance, will. These are all the gods to which we pray. What Jesus is saying is that we can safely use his name as a replacement for all of that.

**(M-23.4:4-5) It becomes the shining symbol for the Word of God, so close to what it stands for that the little space between the two is lost, the moment that the name is called to mind. Remembering the name of Jesus Christ is to give thanks for all the gifts that God has given you.**

Jesus is not referring to the Christian practice of using the name of Jesus Christ in a magical way—that you just invoke his name and then everything is suddenly fine. People have exorcised the devil in the name of Jesus Christ—as if the name itself has magical power. The name has no power. As the Course says, "words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality" (M-21.1:9-10). However, the name of Jesus could work powerfully for a person if it symbolizes the Love of God, and by remembering it, that person identifies with that Love in his or her mind. In fact, the only power in this world is the power of Gods Love in our mind. Therefore, using the name or the person of Jesus or any other symbol that represents the Love of God becomes a way to remember our true Identity.

One of the big mistakes the Church made at the beginning was to say that Jesus was different from us—that he was the Son of God incarnate; the only perfect, sinless, loving one. Therefore, right off the bat, the ego played its only game: making differences real. But what Jesus taught was exactly the opposite. What he would have said to all of us then was: "Experience the love that you feel inside me as nothing other than a mirror of the love that is inside you. The only difference between us is that I know that, and you have forgotten it. That same presence of love, that same light of Christ shines just as brightly in you as it does in me. We are not different." That is the context of this passage. By recalling his love in his name, what we are really doing is remembering that that same love is within us. He becomes the symbol that helps us remember the gifts of God within us, the gifts of His Love, His peace, His Self. We are mistaken when we think of him as an older brother who will magically make everything turn out okay. He is a symbol for us of who we are. That is why he makes such a big point in the Course, to repeat, that we not see him as different from us. He is different in time, because he is an older brother, but he is not different from us in eternity. The way we can remember God and our gratitude to God is through remembering Jesus.

We will see later, when we talk about feeling grateful to each other, that Jesus says that he stands in the midst of the holy relationship. Learning to forgive you and feel grateful to you for being in my life removes the barrier of separation and guilt. Jesus presence then becomes manifest, because his presence of love is always there in us. Our guilt and fear keep it away, and therefore when I let that guilt and fear go and truly join with you, his love has not come to me—it was always there—but now I have come to his love. In this sense, one can say that first I forgive you, then I forgive Jesus, and then I forgive God. Or alternatively, I learn how to feel grateful to you; I therefore learn how to feel grateful to Jesus; and then I learn how to feel grateful to God.

**(M-23.4:6) And gratitude to God becomes the way in which He is remembered, for love cannot be far behind a grateful heart and thankful mind.**

If ingratitude can be seen as one of the cornerstones of the ego system and basically goes hand in hand with judgment, attack, fear, and guilt, then when we undo that ingratitude and allow ourselves to feel grateful to each other, to Jesus, and to God, then love must come, because love has been hidden behind ingratitude. Ingratitude is like a veil, and therefore, when the veil is gone, the Love of God can be experienced.

**(M-23.4:7) God enters easily, for these are the true conditions for your homecoming.**

In this context the conditions for our homecoming would be gratitude. There is a wonderful workbook lesson called "Love is the way we walk in gratitude" (W-pI.195). We can say, then, that one way to awaken from the dream of hatred and return home is to truly know the meaning of gratitude and appreciation; and the way we do that is to become aware of the depth of the ingratitude within us. We simply recognize that, yes, there is a part of me that is deeply ungrateful and unappreciative of what is around me. I realize that that is my ego, but I do not have to do anything with those feelings except learn not to be afraid of them. I need only be aware of how difficult it is to feel truly grateful—not just to say the words "thank you," but to feel them. I need to realize that the ingratitude I feel is a way of saying I do not want to feel gratitude to God because I do not want to return to Him. My ego tells me that if I return to Him, I will be destroyed. Therefore, the only way I can maintain my independence, sanity, and existence is to keep God away; and I do that by being ungrateful. Therefore, if Jesus is the symbol of God, then one of the ways I keep him away is to be ungrateful. If my brothers become a symbol of Jesus and God, then the way I keep them away is to be ungrateful.

All you have to do is simply look at all of those feelings in yourself and acknowledge that you are not allowing yourself to say thank you or admit that you need help because you do not want to return home. Just be aware that that is what you are doing.

**(M-23.5:1-2) Jesus has led the way. Why would you not be grateful to him?**

That is a very good question, especially if Jesus is the way, or certainly within this dream, the symbol of how one returns home. In other words, if he represents how we learn to be selfless and totally loving in the presence of what the world judges as extreme hatred, anger, and attack, why would we not be grateful to him? He symbolizes for us who we are; why would we not be grateful to him?

**(M-23.5:3) He has asked for love, but only that he might give it to you.**

Jesus is not asking for love because he has an ego that sucks up all the love we give him; he asks for love because that is the only way he can give it to us.

**(M-23.5:4-11) You do not love yourself. But in his eyes your loveliness is so complete and flawless that he sees in it an image of his Father. You become the symbol of his Father here on earth. To you he looks for hope, because in you he sees no limit and no stain to mar your beautiful perfection. In his eyes Christs vision shines in perfect constancy. He has remained with you. Would you not learn the lesson of salvation through his learning? Why would you choose to start again, when he has made the journey for you?**

The reason we are not grateful to Jesus and that part of us hates him can be found in what he is saying here: he sees what we do not want to see in us. The ego does not want to recognize that the light of Christs Love shines in us. It does not want us to realize that we are an image of God, an expression and extension of His Love. Therefore, to our egos, he represents a tremendous threat, because he sees in us the end of the ego. The part of our mind that identifies with the ego thought system then says that if I let this Love become real inside me, there will be no room for hate. There is a line from Johns letter that is quoted often in the Course: "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). The ego thus warns that if I let this love in and let this light shine in me, there will be no room for hatred, fear, or darkness, which means there will be no room for me, as an ego.

It is my ego that hates Jesus, and this hatred can take many different forms: direct hatred, indifference, and denial of his presence. It can also take the form of changing him around, so that he is the one who points a finger at me and says, "You are a guilty sinner; but if you suffer and sacrifice, you will become purified." This ego version of Jesus does not see me as love and light, or as one with no limit or stain that mars the beautiful perfection in me. This ego Jesus sees me as sinful. That is what Christianity has taught. As an integral part of the Catholic Mass, for example, every Catholic must say just prior to receiving Communion, which is the body and blood of Jesus: "Lord I am not worthy to receive you." That is not the way Jesus would want us to talk to him. That is why the world has to hate him and why the world changed around what he said. He taught us the exact opposite. This is a good reason not to pay any attention to him, as long as we have an investment in staying in this world this way.

One further thought about unworthiness and the egos use of defenses: Unworthiness is sometimes a disguise for anger, which itself can be a disguise for unworthiness. This is not a circle as much as it is a layering of defenses. In other words, the basic unworthiness is that we are guilty because of the terrible thing we did, and so we are really not worthy of Gods Love. We tried to steal His Love, and actually believe we did, so that makes us very guilty, very sinful, and most unworthy. To defend against the horror and pain of this unworthiness, we project the guilt and judge someone else as unworthy, instead of ourselves. We then get angry, but just as quickly say that anger is bad, and nice boys and girls are not supposed to get angry. Therefore we feel guilty because we are angry, which makes us feel unworthy—and then we just push the whole thing down. It can also take the form of feeling that I am not worthy to stand on my own two feet and tell you what I think I am. If I do, you will squash me like a bug, which is what I believe God will do. I dont do that, but then I get even angrier, and at that point it becomes a vicious circle. The ego just layers its defenses one on top of the other, so that we get further and further away from the original problem: namely, that we believe we are unworthy because of what we did to God. We never stop to look at that, along with the fact that we really never did anything to God. All of our experiences of unworthiness and anger are simply ways of defending against looking within ourselves.

Thus, the gratitude we would feel toward Jesus is that despite all the crazy stuff that goes on inside us, there is a part of us that knows he truly loves us, and that by accepting his love, we can accept the love that we are.

Before moving on to the next theme, our gratitude toward each other, I want to underscore the importance of relating to Jesus as a personal presence. He asks us in a number of places in the text to take him as our model for learning (e.g., T-5.II.12; T-6.in.2:1). The idea, however, is not to emulate him in terms of his earthly life, but to emulate his mind, a mind that can only love. There is a wonderful poem of Helens that I often read at workshops called "The Jesus Prayer"—I will read it in its entirety later (The Gifts of God, p. 82). This is really a prayer we would say to him, that he help us become like him, which means to be loving and defenseless; meeting seeming attacks with love, and not taking peoples attacks personally; learning to live in this world without forgetting that we are not of the world. That is the value of Jesus, and that is why he fills such a prominent place in A Course in Miracles. One of the specific ways in which he can be a helpful model is when we are tempted to see ourselves as unfairly treated, the innocent victims of what the world has done to us, and therefore feel justified in our anger. At that point we can remember Jesus and his life, where, in the eyes of the world, he would certainly have been justified in feeling unfairly treated. Yet, he did not feel that way. We thus can call upon him to help us learn the same lesson he exemplifies for us.

Finally, a few words about how to get beyond the mere saying of the words of gratitude to the experience of gratitude.

There is a workbook lesson entitled "I want the peace of God," and it begins with the statement, "To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything" (W-pI.185.1:1-2). I know of no other way to get from the words to the meaning or the feeling other than to just do it—to let yourself become part of the Course process. This is more than just studying the text, doing the workbook lessons, and reading the teachers manual. It is really letting the thought system of the Course slowly become part of your thought system, until finally there is no difference. Your thought system becomes the Courses and vice versa. You begin by just saying the words, and recognizing, at least on an intellectual level, that there is a part of you that does want to feel grateful—to a particular person as your brother, to Jesus as your older brother, and to God as your Source and Creator. Even though you are aware that you do not totally feel it, you are at least aware enough to take this first step.

This is the same idea as at the end of the Introduction to the workbook (W-in.8,9), where Jesus urges us to just do what the lessons say-dont believe them if you dont want to; dont fight against them, because that does not make sense; just do what each lesson says. Eventually it will become part of you, because there is a part of all of us that longs for what it says, and that longs to go home. Even if we deny him, hate him, yell at him, or feel indifferent toward him, there is a part of us that is deeply grateful to him for his help and for his presence, because he is the symbol of who we are. This is the part of us that we have blocked off, and which we believe we will never get back. His presence, then, is a reminder that what we believe we killed, we have not killed.

The first step is at least being aware of the importance of gratitude. Then be aware of how strongly you resist that experience of gratitude. That is one of the important themes in the Course—to become aware of and to look within at all the ego thoughts in our minds. You do not have to focus on the positive or even try to instill a sense of gratitude in yourself. What you want to do is become aware of the ingratitude in yourself. As you become more aware of it and can look at it without fear, you will eventually let it go. Be aware that there is a part of you that does not want to feel grateful to God as your Source, or to Jesus and the Holy Spirit as your inner Teacher, or to all the other people in this world who symbolize them for you. Just be aware that there is a part of you that does not want to say thank you, and know that is not a sin.

**Part IV
Our Gratitude to Each Other**

Now we turn to the third of our three themes, our gratitude toward each other. This really is the heart of the entire Course, whose principal message is forgiveness. One way of understanding the importance of gratitude is to understand the dimensions of ingratitude. None of us got here in this body and in this world without a fully developed ego thought system; and that means that we cannot but experience ourselves as unfairly treated. That is a crucial part of the ego thought system—that we are innocent victims. The starting point of this thought system is the insane thought that we victimized God—we stole from Him and He is the victim. That insanity gets turned around so that it is now God Who victimizes us, and we are the innocent victims. The entire thought system of the ego arose from those two basic ideas—that I victimized God, and now I am going to be the victim of His victimization. That is why A Course in Miracles says, "Beware of the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated" (T-26.X.4:1).

In order to escape from the thought of victimization, this world was made, along with the separated fragments of this thought, of which each of us is a part. Each of us carries within our minds that same thought of being an innocent victim, which means we believe the world is out to get us, and that all of our unhappiness and misery are due to forces and persons beyond our control. Every child would feel that way toward his parents: "Don't yell at me! You're the one who brought me here. I didn't ask to be born. It's not my fault that I'm here!" Our experience is that we are here by biological accident, whether planned or not. A part of us feels that we had nothing whatsoever to do with it. It all rests on the premise that I am not responsible for the physical universe on a collective scale, and I am certainly not responsible for my personal universe. You are the ones who did it to me. Thus, from the very beginning of our human existence there is the idea that someone else did this to me. I am the product of a physical act of my parents, and that is why I am here. Then, of course, the child coming into the world totally dependent on his or her parents is tailor-made for the reinforcement of this thought system. It is not the world that gives us this thought system of being a victim; we are the ones who gave it to the world, and the world simply reflects it back to us. And it certainly does a very good job of reinforcing a thought system that tells me I am what the world has made of me, an innocent victim. Whether you say that heredity is the prime factor in determining behavior, or the environment, or a combination of both does not matter, because every position is wrong. Once you attribute your behavior to a cause outside yourself, you are caught in that trap.

The key principle of our thought system here in this world as separated egos is that we are victims, and people have done terrible things to us. Therefore, it makes very good sense not to feel grateful. Why should I feel grateful? I did not want to come here. All of my misery is due to the fact that there are terrible people who do terrible things to me. My ego may tell me that not everyone is terrible, that there are some good people in the world—these are the special people, the special love objects who take good care of me. Everything is wonderful when that happens; but they do not take good care of me unless I pay them somehow. The heart of all specialness is the bargain. Therefore, why should I be grateful for the good things you do for me? I have to pay you, and I have to be good back to you. There has to be some kind of a giving in order to get here. This is the insanity of the special relationship bargain. Since I believe I am such a despicable worm and so awful, I cannot believe that I deserve people's love, gratitude, or goodness—there is no way I could deserve it. Therefore, my ego tells me that I have to get it, steal it, or take it from you. But that is not going to work if I do it in a flagrant or blatant way. Thus, I have to steal from you but have it look as if something else is going on.

That is what A Course in Miracles explains very powerfully—how this insane bargaining goes back and forth. The only way I can get love from you and still have it look good for me—so it does not look like I am taking it or stealing it from you—is to pay you for it. And so I try to seduce you with the gifts I offer so that you will be tempted to take what I am giving you, and then give me what I want. Therefore, there is no reason, my ego would tell me, that I should feel grateful to you. Rather, it should be you who feels gratitude to me because of what I have done for you. Now, much of the time this is not a conscious choice. But whether it is or not, these are the thoughts and feelings we all have. The dominant thought is that we have it coming to us: If you are my special love partner, then I deserve this from you because of what I have had to give up and sacrifice. If you are my special hate partner, then there is no reason for feeling grateful to you because you are such a miserable person—look what you've done to me!

Thus, there is no room for genuine gratitude in the ego's system, unless it is false gratitude—pretending to be grateful. In that case, expressing gratitude to you will stroke your ego, and then you will think that you are really a good person; and since I am also a good person, I will get more from you. If you give me a hundred dollars and I am very gracious, appreciative, and I thank you, in back of that I am thinking I will get another hundred dollars from you. If you are warm and loving towards me, I reinforce that by telling you how appreciative I am. Deep down what I want is to have it happen again. That it is not genuine gratitude or a genuine sense of appreciation. It is something that I say to you so that I will get more from you.

That is where all the guilt comes from in specialness, because there is a part of me that knows I am tricking you. Part of me really wants to kill you and steal from your flesh what you have stolen from me, as the Course explains (T-23.II.9-12; T-24.V.4). I know that I am being false, and therefore, I feel guilty. The more guilty I feel, the worse I feel about myself and the greater my need to deny it, and to keep getting more and more. That is the very vicious circle found in all of our special relationships: I feel guilty and have to defend my guilt by stealing from you; then I feel even guiltier, so I have to keep doing it over and over again. There is no room for gratitude here at all, at least not genuine gratitude—the ego's gratitude is only part of the specialness game.

That is why gratitude is such an important part of the Course's system. That is also why Jesus says that he does not need our gratitude, and that God does not need our gratitude or praise (T-6.I.17:1-2). The reason that is mentioned is that part of us thinks He does need our gratitude; otherwise Jesus would not have mentioned it. Part of us thinks that both God and Jesus have an ego, because that is what is found in the Bible: God gets angry and His feelings are hurt if His children do not praise Him, love Him, express gratitude to Him, and burn things at the altar for Him, etc. Then Jesus, being God's Son, of course, would be taking after the Old Man, so he would do the same thing. All the insanity that the world put upon God, Jesus naturally inherits.

Again, ingratitude would have to go hand in hand with everything else in the ego system. The opposite of that, obviously, would be gratitude. One of the statements that Jesus makes in the workbook lesson "Love is the way I walk in gratitude" is that we should "give thanks for every living thing" (W-pI.195.6:3)—to everything that appears to be alive outside us in the world, because everything is simply a screen onto which we project all our unconscious hatred and guilt. However, because our guilt is unconscious, we do not know about it; and if we do not know about it, we cannot bring it to the light. A Course in Miracles teaches us to bring the darkness to the light, the illusions to the truth, the fear to the love. But how can we do that if we do not know about it? It is all so buried. The primary defense of the ego, which in a sense is the most primitive but the most basic of all, is denial. We just blot out whatever we do not want to see—as Lesson 195 explains. There is no way we can heal this or change our mind about it until we become aware of it. That is the purpose of the world, from the Holy Spirit's point of view.

The ego made up the world as a hiding place from God—as a place in which murder becomes the rule, and suffering and pain become the experience. But as seen through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, the world becomes a classroom. The way that works is that I see in you the projection of everything that I had not known was present within me. In this sense, we can liken our lives to being in a movie theater where we look at the screen and see an out picturing of the film that is running through the projector—the projector is really our own mind. However, we do not know what the film is, because the projector is not in our body. One of the major ideas in the Course is that the mind is not in the body—it is outside the body. A common confusion in the world today is that the mind and the brain are somehow the same or are connected. The mind is not in the brain.

To understand this, once again think of your physical/psychological self sitting in a movie theater, but what you are seeing on the screen is a film that is outside your body, and yet it is your film. The film of guilt and ingratitude that is running through the projector that is our mind casts an image on the screen. But you don't know what is in back of you. It is like the prisoners in Plato's cave—they cannot turn and see the light in back of them outside the cave because they are chained and can only look at the shadows on the wall in front of them. That is the situation all of us are in.

Remember, the body and the brain were made specifically to keep reality away from us. They were also made to keep guilt away from us—because to the ego, guilt is what hides the light of truth in us. Since the ego never wants us to look at that light of truth, it makes up a song-and-dance routine. It says there is no light of truth in your mind—there is only the darkness of guilt, which is so awful that you should never look at it. So we say, "Fine, I'll never look at it; instead, I'll look outside." Again, we sit in the movie theater chained by our fear, so terrified to turn around and look at where the picture is coming from that we forget that there is nothing outside or in front of us except the screen. When we sit in a movie theater engrossed in the movie, we forget that what we are watching is make believe. It seems very real. We get all caught up and identified with the characters and the action—we feel fear, anxiety, relief, love, happiness, sadness, guilt, depression, boredom—the same as we feel in our seeming waking life. Just as when we dream at night, we forget that nothing is happening. If it is a bad dream, we feel anxiety, fear, terror, guilt, depression, loss, etc., because at that moment we forget that it is all a dream. What we call lucid dreamers these days are people who, in the midst of a dream at night, are aware that they are dreaming. These people can be having a nightmare and suddenly within the dream—they are not awake, they are still within the dream—they say "Oh, this is a dream." Then the terror goes away.

In a sense, the whole purpose of A Course in Miracles is to help us become lucid dreamers. Again, it is as if we are sitting in the movie theater and have forgotten that there is nothing happening out there—that it is all literally make believe. What is really happening is nothing more than a projecting of what is happening behind me. The film is running through my mind, but I don't know it is there because my fear is so great that it has chained me so that I can only look forward, not in back of me. That is why no one these days knows that the mind is not in the body. The mind is thought of as somehow trapped in the brain or the body, but that is not the case.

We can come to realize that there is a loving Presence next to us in the theater—Jesus or the Holy Spirit—Who is teaching us how to look at the screen. That loving Presence tells us that what we are seeing out there, what we believe is upsetting and victimizing us, is not out there at all; it is simply something within our own mind—our thoughts. We are seeing what is on the screen only because of our desire to see it. Our Teacher is saying, "You are the one who is putting it out there; it is your film. If you are feeling victimized, it is because you have made a choice to see yourself as victimized, and therefore you are the one who can make the choice to see yourself as not victimized. Now at last you know you have a choice." That is where the expression of gratitude is coming from. That is the reason the Course teaches us that we should be grateful for every living thing, and that every encounter is a holy encounter

Until A Course in Miracles—and the Course is only one spirituality—I did not know I had a choice. The only choice I believed I had was between murder and murder. It was either that your body or mine would be murdered, which is no real choice. What the Course helps us recognize is that we do have a choice. On the one hand, there is murder; on the other, there is the miracle. On the one hand, there is hatred or fear; on the other, there is forgiveness or love. But I have a choice. I am not asked in the Course at this point to break my chains and turn around, because my fear is still so great. My ego tells me that if I break those chains and turn around, I will be devastated, which is what Jesus is referring to in the section in the text called "The Fear to Look Within." He thus explains, "Loudly the ego tells you not to look inward, for if you do your eyes will light on sin and God will strike you blind" (T-21.IV.2:3). If I break through those chains of fear and turn around and look at the film running through the projector (the guilt in my mind), I will be devastated, because God is there. And this is not a loving God—He is a wrathful, punitive, bloodthirsty God.

The Course at this point is not telling me that I have to turn around and look. It is telling me to just continue to sit in the theater and look at the screen. But now I know there is a presence next to me who will guide me and teach me how to look. He will teach me how to be grateful to everything that I perceive and experience on the screen, which is nothing more than my experiences here in this world. He will tell me that I should be especially grateful for those people who are the biggest pains in the neck; who cause me the greatest grief; who bring me the greatest pain and suffering; who make me feel the most guilty, the most anxious, etc. Those are the people who are showing me, if I look at the screen correctly, what is within my own mind. If they had not come along, I would never know the content of the film, and if I do not know the content of the film, I cannot change my mind about it.

Now, with Jesus sitting next to me, I can look at what you have done to me—my anger, hurt, resentment, my justified murderous thoughts; and as I look, he taps me gently and says, "My brother, choose again." What he is saying is that I can look at you differently, and now feel grateful, but not for what your ego has done. The Course says of itself that it is simple, but that does not mean simple-minded. It never says I should be grateful because another person's ego has bashed me in the head. What it is saying is that I should feel grateful because what I am accusing your ego of doing is exactly the same as what I am accusing my ego of doing. However, without your having been there, I would not know what my ego was doing. My ego would tell me that when you do this, my choice is between murdering you and letting you murder me. That is the only choice. "Kill or be killed," as the Course says at one point (M-17.7:11). What Jesus helps me recognize is that my choice is not between murder and murder. I choose between murder and the miracle—I either continue to hate and attack you, or I forgive you.

The gratitude the Course is asking us to feel toward each other is not for what you do for me or for the miserable way you have treated me. It is gratitude for being able to see in you a mirror of my own self. And now that I see it in you, I know it is within me, and by changing my mind about you, I am changing my mind about myself. That is the source of the gratitude. I cannot forgive you without this loving presence next to me, however. My gratitude toward you is impossible without my also feeling gratitude toward Jesus or the Holy Spirit. If I believe I can forgive you by myself, I am doing exactly what I did right at the beginning. I am doing it without God. I am saying, "I do not need You; I can make up my own self, my own will; my own world, and I do not need You at all." It is the same idea—simply recognizing that, as the Course says (based on John's gospel [5:19,30]), of myself I can do nothing (e.g., T-8.IV.7:3). The ego interprets that as great weakness, but in truth, it is great strength. It is realizing that I cannot change my mind by myself, because it is my self that got me into this mess, that accuses you; that believes I can do it on my own. And it is my self that will keep me in hell. Thus, it is recognizing not only that I cannot do this without Jesus, but also that I cannot do it without you. You represent a part of my self that I have split off and pushed outside me. And until I recognize that you are not outside me, but are really a part of me, then I will never know the Christ that I am.

My changing my mind about you means recognizing that whatever you have done or not done has had no effect on my reality as God's Child. The love and peace that I can identify as coming from God cannot be taken from me simply because of what you have done, and if I am not feeling that love and peace, I cannot validly say it is because of what you have done. You did not give it to me; it is not your love and concern that is making me feel good. So, too, it is not your hatred that is making me feel terrible. In other words, the love and peace in me is totally independent of what you have or have not done.

To use another example, if I see you as an ungrateful wretch, it is a projection of how I see myself. Remember, though, it is possible to look at someone and say that person is not feeling gratitude, but without attacking or condemning that person. Basically, right from the beginning Jesus is calling us ungrateful wretches, but not as an attack. Why would he talk so much about gratitude if he knew we weren't grateful? Why would he talk so much about peace and love if he did not know that we were murderers? And he tells us that all the time. But it is not an attack. He is simply saying, "Listen to what I am telling you because this will make you feel better. And I am doing this because I love you." In other words, it is possible to observe what someone is doing without attack.

In the biblical stories, Jesus knew people were crucifying him; yet, he explains: "As the world judges these things, but not as God knows them, I was betrayed, abandoned, beaten, torn, and finally killed" (T-6.I.9:2). These are objective statements, without condemnation. He did not experience that as an attack. But if you accuse someone of attacking you, and if you accuse someone of being an ungrateful wretch, then obviously it is because you first accused yourself of being an ungrateful wretch, which of course all of us are; otherwise, none of us would be here. The idea is to try to become aware of the ungrateful wretches and the insane murderers inside each of us so that we can become comfortable with that idea without feeling guilty about it or afraid of it. The fear of not looking at it was the problem in the first place. But the looking at it is what lets it go.

Again, the Course makes very clear that as we are sitting in this movie theater, we have only two possible choices of whom we are going to sit with: the ego or the Holy Spirit. We cannot sit alone. It is either the thought of fear or the thought of love. And if I am identifying with the thought of fear, I am turning away from the thought of love. And if I identify with the thought of love, I am turning away from the thought of fear. There is no choice in that. My choice is only with which way I am going to go.

Thus, if I am looking at my ego, seeing you as an ungrateful wretch, and then recognize that I am seeing myself as an ungrateful wretch, I must have chosen to look with Jesus or the Holy Spirit, because my ego would never help me see that I am projecting. That is the letting it go. Simply choosing to look at the ego with the Holy Spirit is to let it go. I look at the investment I have in an outcome of something; I look at my hatred and my ingratitude and say, "Yes, there I am, an ungrateful wretch. Of course. If I weren't, I would not be here. The very fact that I believe I am here is saying that I am an ungrateful wretch. But now I can look at it. And now I know that God does not think that way about me. It is just something that I made up." But the way that I know I made it up is to look at it. And the way that I look at it is first to see it in someone else, by accusing that person. Again, that is what the sequence is—I sit in the theater and feel grateful to you because I see you as the screen, what is inside me. I am grateful to Jesus because I am seeing through his eyes, and that gratitude toward you and him enables me to experience my gratitude toward God as my Creator. Simple!

**Part V
"Love is the way I walk in gratitude"**

The passage from the teacher's manual that we saw earlier spoke about love following from a grateful heart (M-23.4:6). In expressing our gratitude to Jesus, we remember the Love of God. Likewise, as we will see now in the context of Lesson 195 "Love is the way I walk in gratitude," it is through expressing our gratitude for our world and all the situations, circumstances, and especially the relationships in the world that we are able to let go of our ingratitude. That ingratitude is born of our feeling that we have been cheated, that God is not our Creator, the Source of our being, and that we can function on our own. Thus, not only do we not feel grateful, but we do not even believe there is a call for our gratitude. It is that basic thought that we keep buried and deeply hidden in our minds. Then we project it and feel the same lack of gratitude and appreciation for everyone else. As long as we hold on to that, what we are really doing—as we will see in this lesson—is keeping ourselves separate. Gratitude is just another way of expressing our joining with each other, and that then becomes the way of undoing our belief that we are separate, not only from each other, but from our Creator.

Now Lesson 195:

**(W-pI.195.1:1) Gratitude is a lesson hard to learn for those who look upon the world amiss.**

As long as we feel unfairly treated and justified in being innocent, we will believe that the world has victimized us, and done us an injustice and a disservice. And, obviously, as long as we have that belief, gratitude will make no sense at all. Ingratitude is a perfectly logical, reasonable effect of everything in the ego thought system. Why should I feel grateful to a God Who I believe has stolen from me and is arrogantly pretending He is a Creator? Why should I feel grateful to someone who I believe is trying to steal from me just the way God did? Why should I feel grateful to a Jesus who thinks that he is better than I am? Obviously they do not think that way, but within a thought system that begins with a belief in separation and differences—which means we would feel sinful, guilty, and fearful—we feel attack is justified, and therefore gratitude would make no sense. And since we all identify with that ego thought system—otherwise, none of us would be here - then it also makes no sense for us to feel appreciative of where we are, of the people whom we are with, or of the world that furnishes us with a classroom.

It certainly makes perfect sense not to feel grateful to the loving Presence of God, or to the Holy Spirit or Jesus who takes us back home. And it certainly makes no sense to feel grateful to a God Who believes that He created us, when we really know that we are the ones who created ourselves. That is what Jesus means in saying, "Gratitude is a lesson hard to learn for those who look upon the world amiss." And there is no one in this world who does not look on this world amiss. If we looked on this world correctly, we wouldn't be here anymore. In a sense, the whole purpose of A Course in Miracles is to help us look at this world differently. Gratitude, then, enables us to do just that.

**(W-pI.195.1:2-3) The most that they can do is see themselves as better off than others. And they try to be content because another seems to suffer more than they.**

What most people feel grateful for is that they are doing well in life, and that they are better off than many other people—we feel grateful that we have enough food on our plates while there are starving people all over the world; or we feel grateful that we are warm, while there are people freezing and without adequate heating in other places. We may be grateful that we live on the East Coast and not the West Coast where they have all the earthquakes. There is that perfectly insane line that people so often say: "There but for the grace of God go I." Well, that is not very loving. When I was a kid, I was a big basketball fan and I remember watching some of the college games, especially the Catholic colleges like St. John's, St. Peter's, and Seton Hall. When one of their players would be at the foul line, he would make the sign of the cross before shooting the foul shot. Sometimes, too, when you see a touchdown pass during a football game, the receiver kneels and crosses himself, or says thank you, pointing to the heavens. This is fine, if God is on your side [Laughter], which is what we think. But the gratitude is always based on your having gotten what you wanted, and you do not think about the fact that the other guy didn't get what he wanted.

Gloria's brother and sister-in-law are born-again Christians. A number of years ago, their daughter, who at that point was 17 or so, went on a school trip to the Great Adventure Amusement Park in New Jersey. There was a bad fire at the park that day, and a number of children were killed. Their daughter was on her way there that morning, but the bus broke down and so they got there hours after the fire had been put out. I remember Gloria's sister-in-law saying to us afterwards, "God was really good to us because He saved our daughter." Well, you can understand how she felt, but then what about the parents of the children who were not as fortunate? That is what this is talking about—that we feel grateful because we are better off than others. Implicit in that is the idea that somehow God has favored me and has not favored other people. The arrogance of that is that God is favoring me because I am a good person—you know, I have been a good Christian, or a good Jew, or a good Muslim, or I have been a good this and a good that—and someone else obviously has not been as good, because he or she has not fared as well.

For many people it seems so automatic to thank God when good things happen. But you should really think about the implications of that way of thinking. The only good thing in this world is whatever offers us a means of healing our minds, which means that everything in this world has a potential for good. There is a line from Hamlet that you may have heard me quote other times that really expresses this same idea—that there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. A Course in Miracles would say the same thing. The Course says that the body and the world are neutral (W-pII.294), and that the purpose we give them is all the meaning they have. So something that the world would judge as a catastrophe, if I look at it right, then offers me an opportunity to learn—for example, that the Son of God cannot be hurt; the Son of God cannot be taken from; or the Son of God cannot hurt anyone. That is the end of guilt. Thus, what makes something right or wrong or good or bad has nothing to do with the thing itself or the circumstance itself. It has to do with our perception of it.

The belief that my life has been spared or that I have done well in my life, and that God has rewarded me, is a way of saying He has rewarded me and has not rewarded someone else, so I am better off and God loves me. But what that really is, is a defense against the underlying thought that is exactly the opposite: namely, that I do not deserve anything. None of us believes we deserve happiness and peace in this world, because we believe we have stolen them. Anything that we believe is good in this world we believe originally came from God and that we took it; and at some point God is going to catch up with us. Thus, none of us in this world really believes we deserve good fortune, whatever we judge that to be. And so when we do appear to have good fortune, and then say that God has been good to me, we are really reacting against what we truly believe: that we do not deserve this. But rather than deal with the fact that I am so sinful, guilty, and rotten, and do not deserve anything, what I do is say that I am the good one, and this other person is the rotten one. Now I have the proof, because this person was killed in this accident while I was spared; or this person died in this earthquake, or lost his home in the earthquake, and I am fine. Thus I can prove that I am the innocent one because God has found the guilty one; and it is not me, it is that person, and God has punished that person.

Now, most of the time, these thoughts are not conscious, because the guilt involved would be overwhelming. But the thoughts are there nonetheless. And that is why we say such strange things as, "There but for the grace of God go I," and we try to ascribe to God motivations that have nothing to do with God but only with us. God does not have any motivation—He would have to have an ego to be motivated. God's Love simply is, and it does not pick or choose or sleep late in the morning so bad things happen on that day. God's Love is constant and consistent. But we, as good healthy egos, are very split and we have lots of motives. Again, what we do is project those motives onto God and then believe that our gratitude is dependent upon what happens outside us. Therefore, we will not be grateful if something bad happens; we will be grateful only when something good happens. We thank God for the good things and do not thank Him for the bad things.

Part of the reason for not thanking God for the bad things is that we think that He caused them—and He caused them as a way of punishing us. There are times actually - this is also expressed in this lesson - where people do thank God for the bad things. We believe that God's Love causes us to suffer and to sacrifice, and that that is His way of purifying us of all our bad thoughts. That is the insanity we have all grown up with—that somehow God demands that we sacrifice and suffer so that we can be purified.

From another point of view, saying "God loves me" implies that He also can not love me, and so what seems to be a pure kind of prayer is actually a defeating kind of prayer, too. Thus, God loves me today because I have been a good boy; but tomorrow I may not be; and, furthermore, He knows all those bad thoughts in my mind anyway, and so at some point He is going to pay attention to them, and then I am finished. Once you have a thought that God loves you, and obviously He does not love everyone else, then you are saying that His love is conditional. That is another wonderful way of seeing how this has nothing whatsoever to do with God, but is simply a projection of what is inside us, because it is our love that is conditional; and that, of course, is what special love is.

**(W-pI.195.1:4-6) How pitiful and deprecating are such thoughts! For who has cause for thanks while others have less cause? And who could suffer less because he sees another suffer more?**

This is the insanity of our thought system, which obviously everyone here shares—that somehow I feel better if other people suffer. Of course that is not the case if the people who are suffering are those with whom I identify. Because then I feel I am suffering.

The more people who suffer and die, the more I am off the hook. The more sinful, guilty, suffering people that I can find in the world, the greater is my chance that God will forget about me and focus only on those people out there. Everyone shares in this kind of insanity. The problem is, of course, that we do not look at it and acknowledge it in ourselves. Then, when someone we judge as bad, sinful, and deserving of punishment gets it, we feel better. Years ago a rapist-murderer was executed in Florida. Many people were just rooting for him to get it—the whole country, it seemed, celebrated as if it were a major holiday when he was executed. Now at last we found out who the real sinner was, the one who was responsible for the whole separation. Psychologically, of course, that is true, because we all feel guilty of having raped God and stolen from Him. And therefore what we call rape in this world is just a specific form of that much larger rape. But we finally found the guy who did it, and he looked to be so healthy and normal and innocent and wonderful, which of course is exactly what we do. We are the face of innocence that conceals the fact that we are really vicious rapists. Again, what enables us to get off the hook is finding the guilty one. That is why so many people in the country were so glad that he finally got it. What we are saying to God is that we are not the ones who did it; we are not the miserable rapists; here he is! Everyone acknowledged him to be the greatest sinner in the world, and therefore he deserved to be punished. Now that he is punished, I magically hope that God will forget about me. It never works that way; but that is the insanity of our thought—that we believe we can be happy and "suffer less" because we see someone else suffering more. At that point, of course, our gratitude is that someone else got it, and we didn't.

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

**(W-pI.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-pI.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 ourwill 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-pI.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."

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

**(W-pI.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-pII.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-pI.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.

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

The next paragraph is going to describe exactly why we do not feel justified in being grateful.

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

This thought, unfortunately, is embedded in the minds of everyone. This powerfully and succinctly summarizes the laws of chaos (T-23.II). Let me talk a little about this because, again, this explains why none of us feels we have to be grateful. Before I comment further on that, though, I will explain the concept itself and then read another passage, from the text that makes the same point.

The original ontological instant when we believed we could separate from God and actually perceive Him as other than us was the beginning of the dream. The reality, of course, is that Christ does not experience Himself as separate from God. While it is true that God created Christ and Christ did not create God and that is a difference, there is no consciousness in Christ (the Son of God) that can step back and perceive a difference. It is only when the separation thought appears to arise within the mind of the Sonship that the Son can step back and believe there is a Creator God out there and the Son, the created—and that is not fair. That is the beginning.

Then the ego says, "I understand why God is the Creator and I am not: because I was the creator first and God stole that from me. There is a difference—God is the superior, and I the inferior." That is the judgment of the difference. Remember, though, Christ does not even recognize a difference. Christ in His true Identity is totally one with God, so there is no duality, no perception of a subject and an object. But when the separation appears to occur, there is a difference. The egos first interpretation is that this is not fair—God has something I do not have, something I am lacking. Inevitably, within the ego dynamic, the next step goes from the perception of lack to the belief in deprivation: the reason I am lacking something is that someone else has deprived me of it. There is no one else around at this point, however. It is a two-character drama at first: God and the Son. If the Son is lacking, which is the beginning of a feeling of guilt—there is something wrong with me—the reason is that God took it from him. Thus, God stole from me, which now justifies my stealing back from Him. But now I am terrified that God is going to come raging after me and steal from me. The insanity of this is explained and described in very graphic detail in "The Laws of Chaos" section. Though thoroughly insane, this is the basic thought everyone has. The world has its origin in the Sons need to hide from this thought, which means that every one of us has this thought system embedded in our own consciousness, our own mind - the idea that someone is going to steal from me.

Now, since this is a world of differences, there is always someone that I am going to judge as being better than I. Someone is prettier, younger, richer, or has more power. The whole world is based on that. You always find someone who is different. My initial thought, of which I may not be conscious, is that there is something wrong with me. That is the basic ego thought: there is something wrong with me; I am a second-class citizen. But now I understand why there is something wrong and lacking: you took it from me, and that is not fair! So I am now justified in taking it back from you. This is what A Course in Miracles calls the face of innocence. Consequently, there is no way that I can feel grateful to you or anyone else, because I believe you have stolen from me.

Even if I believe I am well off, there is a part of my mind that has to be extremely vigilant. Just as the Course says we should be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom (T-7.I.2:8), the ego says the very same thing: we should be vigilant only for the ego and its kingdom. If I have something you do not have, then I must be very vigilant that you do not sneak in in the middle of the night and steal it back from me. Whether you are going to do this physically by actually trying to rob, kill, rape, or do something else violent to me, or you are going to do it psychologically, I must believe that you are going to do this. Therefore, I conclude that no one in this world can be trusted. I further believe that those special love partners that I believe are my friends and allies are in it only for what they can get from me. And when the day comes that they no longer get what they want from me, they are not going to want me either, so I always have to be vigilant against them. Thus, from the egos point of view, there is no one in this world whom we can love or trust.

Gratitude therefore has absolutely no place in the ego system unless it is the egos warped sense of gratitude, like its warped sense of love: I am grateful to you because you played the special relationship game with me. But that obviously is not a gratitude based on love or unity, for it is always based on differences. I am grateful to you today because you have given me what I want; but you may not do the same thing tomorrow. Besides, the only way I got you to do it is by stealing from you and making a bargain. Therefore, I know at some point you are going to want to do the same thing back.

To recap, this is how the whole thing began. I as a separated Son of God believe I stole from God. Despite the fact that I try to rationalize that He stole from me, there is a part of my mind that knows that is not true. I accuse myself of attacking and stealing from God. Therefore I must believe, since I have made attack real in my mind, that God is going to do the same thing back. I believe I stole the Kingdom of Heaven and Gods Love and took it as my own, and therefore I believe God is going to do it back. Because that is such a terrifying thought, what I do is split the whole thing off and forget about it. But that same thought is repeated over and over, and now I believe that everyone in my world is going to steal from me because I believe I stole. That is what these next passages in the text are going to talk about.

**(T-7.VII.8:1-2) Attack could never promote attack unless you perceived it as a means of depriving you of something you want.** [I want something and you are not going to let me have it—that is your attack.] **Yet you cannot lose anything unless you do not value it, and therefore do not want it.**

The only source of anger that we all feel, really, is that someone has done something to hurt us. The bottom line in all of my attacks, anger, and judgments is the belief that you have stolen the peace of God from me. Everything in the world of symbols that I identify with—my money, my body, my loved ones, my house, my car, etc.—are simply symbols of Gods peace or Gods home.

Therefore, when I get angry or upset with you what I am really angry about is that you stole the peace of God from me, because that is what I am always accusing myself of. Thus, the only cause for any anger in the world, regardless of its seeming justification, is the belief that you have stolen the peace and the Love of God from me. Basically, what I say whenever I get angry is that I was perfectly loving, happy, and peaceful until you came along and did this terrible thing, or you failed to do this wonderful thing that you should have done. That is why I am so unhappy, depressed, or so sick. I am accusing you of taking the peace of God away from me.

The essence of the message of A Course in Miracles is that no one in the world has the power to take anything away from me, because the peace of God is a decision I make in my mind, and no one can come into my mind. You can do something to my body, but you can do nothing to my mind. If I no longer feel the peace of God, it is because I am the one who has given it to you; I am the one who has thrown it away. But rather than accept responsibility for what I have done, I say you are the one who has done it. So, obviously, I am not going to feel grateful to you—after all, look what you have done! That is what this passage in the text is talking about. I cannot lose anything unless I do not value it and have given it away and do not want it. This is not referring to anything material—it is about a thought. If I get upset, it is not because of what gets done to my body—the outside world and my body are nothing more than symbols. Thus, if I get upset because my house was destroyed in a hurricane, an earthquake, or a fire, it is because I have identified myself with my house. I have said that my physical house is my home and I have lost it. What I am really saying—over and over in everything in my life—is that I have lost my real house, my real home, but I am the one who threw it away. Then I claim that the reason I am now homeless is that there was a fire or a hurricane, or that I did not have enough money to pay my mortgage, or whatever. The real reason I am upset, though, is not that I lost a physical house—it is that I made that house a symbol of my identity and my real home, which means I made that house a substitute for my home in Heaven. One way the Course describes special relationships is that they are substitutes for God or for reality. So that is what happens with our physical home, whether it is the body, a loved ones body that I identify with, or my clothing, etc. That is why we get so upset when things happen to our home, our clothing, our bodies, etc. It reminds us of what we originally believe we destroyed, and because we destroyed it we then believe we will never get it back. We deny any responsibility for it and blame it on outer circumstances like a hurricane or an earthquake. And even better, we blame it on certain people. You have stolen from me. So:

**(T-7.VII.8:3) This makes you feel deprived of it, and by projecting your own rejection you then believe that others are taking it from you.**

The fact is that I lack of Gods peace because I have thrown it away. But I project responsibility for that lack and then I believe that the reason I do not have it is that someone has deprived me of it. Jesus is saying that what has happened is that you projected your own rejection—I am the one who has rejected my Self; I am the one who has rejected the Christ in me; I am the one who has rejected Gods Love and peace. But I claim that I am not the one who has done it. This is really what the whole world is about. I am the one who has chosen to be upset, but I forget that I made that choice, and then I say I am not the one who has done it, you have done it to me. I project the responsibility onto you; I believe you are taking it from me.

**(T-7.VII.8:4-5) You must be fearful if you believe that your brother is attacking you to tear the Kingdom of Heaven from you. This is the ultimate basis for all the egos projection.**

I must believe that, because I believe deep down that I am the one who tore the Kingdom of Heaven away from God. That is the original separation thought. And everything in the whole thought system of the ego that the Course talks about is predicated on that basic belief. We all accuse ourselves of having stolen from God; of tearing the Kingdom of Heaven from Him, and establishing ourselves on the throne, declaring that this is the kingdom of heaven right here. But the guilt and terror over that is so enormous that we cannot but believe that God is going to come crashing through this defense and tear this world apart, and then He is going to drag us back home and destroy us. That is the terrifying fear that we all experience but cannot deal with at all.

Consequently, we not only deny what we have done, we also deny what we believe God is going to do. But when you deny something, it does not disappear—it stays there and then surfaces again in different forms. In our everyday lives it commonly surfaces as something like, I feel guilty and miserable because I do not love anyone; I feel terribly fearful, as well as angry, at how other people are going to do the same thing back. You are going to do to me what I believe I have done to you, because what I believe I have done to you is what I know I have done to God. And just as God is going to come crashing through and steal back from me, I believe you are going to steal back from me as well. Everyone in this world then becomes suspect. We cannot trust anyone (from the egos point of view), because either you are a direct enemy—all the special hate objects—or a closet enemy - all the special love partners. I can trust you today because I have won what I wanted from you; I have seduced you and triumphed over you. But at some point you are going to try to steal it back from me.

**(T-7.VII.9:1) Being the part of your mind that does not believe it is responsible for itself, and being without allegiance to God, the ego is incapable of trust.**

This tells us why we do not trust anyone. And by the way, when A Course in Miracles tells us to trust our brothers who are one with us (W-pI.181.1:1), it does not mean that we are to trust the other persons ego. That is not helpful, besides being silly. What it does mean is that despite the others ego, you know the light of Christ still shines in him or her, which also means that despite my ego and my awful thoughts about myself, I know the light of Christ is still shining within me.

There is no basis for trust at all within the ego system. Within that system a lack of trust is perfectly justified because you know everyone is going to steal from you, just as you stole from everyone else.

**(T-7.VII.9:2-5) Projecting its insane belief that you have been treacherous to your Creator,** [the fundamental ego thought] **it** [the ego] **believes that your brothers, who are as incapable of this as you are, are out to take God from you. Whenever a brother attacks another, that is what he believes. Projection always sees your wishes in others. If you choose to separate yourself from God, that is what you will think others are doing to you.**

You are out to take the peace and the Love of God from me. You are out to take from me the happiness that comes from God. And I must believe you are going to do that because I secretly believe that is what I have done to you. And I have done it to you, because I have originally done it to God

**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-pI.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, youare. 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.

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

The next paragraph talks about the other side: what gratitude and love really are.

**(W-pI.195.4:1) You do not offer God your gratitude because your brother is more slave than you, nor could you sanely be enraged if he seems freer.**

It makes no sense to thank God because we are better off than someone else or that someone else is better off than we are. The crucial point in all of this is the role of comparisons in the ego thought system. Comparisons always come from differences, and that is where the problem is. The ego always wants us to perceive differences, and to have us believe that we are on the short end of the stick because someone else has done this to us. What we really thank God for in truth is that we are all the same, because that is how He created us, as we will be discussing shortly.

**(4:2-3) Love makes no comparisons. And gratitude can only be sincere if it be joined to love.**

What joins God and Christ is Love. In The Song of Prayer this joining is called "the song of prayer," a song of love and thanksgiving that the Father sings to the Son and the Son sings to the Father (S-1.in.1). It is only when the Son believed he was separate from God that he began the comparison, that God is the Creator and I am not, and that is not fair. At that point, love is out the window and taking its place are jealousy, envy, guilt, fear, sin, attack, and loss.

True love does not make comparisons (see also, T-4.II.11:12; T-24.II.1:1), which means I can be truly grateful to you only if I perceive you as one with me; I can be truly grateful for a situation only when I perceive it as an opportunity to learn that I am one with you and one with God. It is impossible to be grateful to someone who has something you do not have, or who has given you something that you now have and that person no longer has. What you can be grateful for is someone extending love to you, which really mirrors your extension of love to that person; or you can be grateful because someone is calling for love. As A Course in Miracles explains, what the world judges as an attack is really an expression of fear, and fear is a call for the love that has been denied or rejected, and that underlies the fear (see, for example, T-12.I.9-10). Thus, when I perceive you as attacking me and can remember what the Course calls the judgment of the Holy Spirit (that your attack is really a call for love), I recognize that it is also mirrors my call for love. Both of us are now joined, in that we are yearning for the same love we believe we have thrown away. Our joining—and it does not have to be on a physical level; it certainly can occur in my own mind—is how I experience gratitude to you, because you are reminding me of the lesson I want to learn. In that experience of gratitude is where the memory of love is found.

If it is truly love, then there are no comparisons. I do not see you as better or worse than I am. What I do recognize is that there are different forms in this world that express that love or that call for love; but the different forms do not mean anything. What is important is that they share the same content. Gratitude cannot be sincere if it is an expression of an unequal to an unequal. It is sincere only when it is an expression of equality. That is what it means to say that gratitude is joined to love.

**(4:4-6) We offer thanks to God our Father that in us all things will find their freedom. It will never be that some are loosed while others still are bound. For who can bargain in the name of love?**

The idea that "some are loosed while others still are bound" is from the statement in the gospel that says we have the power to bind or to loose (free) people from their sins (Matthew 16:19b; John 20:23). Our thanks to God is that through His presence in our mind, through His Voice, the Holy Spirit, we recognize that we are all one. As the workbook says elsewhere, "When I am healed, I am not healed alone" (W-pI.137.h). When my mind is healed, every mind is healed. When I free myself from the prison of my ego thought system, every mind is freed. Other minds may choose not to accept that freedom, but within my mind and experience, everyone is free. It cannot be the case that I am free and you are imprisoned, or that you are free and I am imprisoned. That is extremely important to understand, not only in our practical life, but also in terms of what A Course in Miracles is teaching. It must be the case that we are both the same, if love is true.

The ego will always tell us we are different. Thus, Jesus asks us to consider "who can bargain in the name of love?" That is what the ego is always doing, and that is what specialness is. It is a bargain because we perceive another as having something we do not have and that we want. We therefore have to get it from the other person. As the Course explains, the ego's wish or preference would always be to get it through outright attack (T-15.VII.6:3-4). You have something I want, so I am just going to kill you and get it from you. But that does not go over well in our society; therefore, rather than killing outright, the ego has to delay its gratification somewhat, so it kills you slowly, psychologically. That is what special love is—I kill you at the bargaining table, which is really the ego's altar to death and guilt. Then I take from you what I want; but it does not look as if that is what I am doing.

A student shared an experience that was helpful in processing these dynamics. She noticed she was becoming more and more irritated when the minister in her church, whom she admired and respected, would always respond with "Great!" or "Fantastic!" when she asked him how he was doing. After a while she thought, "All right, so he is a minister. But dammit, doesn't he ever have a bad day? I do not want him feeling good all the time!" Then it occurred to her that if he were feeling so great, where did he get it from? He must have stolen it from her-and she said that really annoyed her.

It is always helpful to have an experience like that. The ego's misperception is always there whether we know it or not. That is what jealousy is all about. It all stems from the idea that God had something we did not have. As I have said many other times, you can understand why the Course keeps saying how simple it is, because everything is always the same. Things are always expressions of the fundamental difference that the ego makes real, or they are expressions of the fundamental unity that the Holy Spirit makes real. It is one or the other.

**(5) Therefore give thanks, but in sincerity. And let your gratitude make room for all who will escape with you; the sick, the weak, the needy and afraid, and those who mourn a seeming loss or feel apparent pain, who suffer cold or hunger, or who walk the way of hatred and the path of death. All these go with you. Let us not compare ourselves with them, for thus we split them off from our awareness of the unity we share with them, as they must share with us.**

That is a very clear statement. It is similar to the discussion of true empathy in the text (T-16.I), which talks about why it is not loving to empathize or sympathize with people who are in pain or are suffering. The Course calls that false empathy, because what we are really doing is identifying with and strengthening the other person's weakness. True empathy identifies with the strength of Christ in someone. Therefore, to judge other people as being in pain, being needy, suffering, etc., appears to be loving and is certainly a feeling the world condones, but in doing so, all we are really doing is saying, "Isn't this a terrible thing that happened to you!" The part of us saying that is also saying, "I'm really glad it happened to you, because that means it did not happen to me." That indicates why we always are so involved in other people's suffering, and why we feel so sorry for them. We want to save the weak, the sick, the dying—all suffering people in the world—because we want to see them that way. And we want to see them that way because if they are in pain, it means we are not in pain. Moreover, they are in pain because God is punishing them, because God is the source of all pain; He is punishing them because they are the sinful ones who stole from Him. He found them out, and He is punishing them. If He found them out, caught them, and punished them, then we are off the hook. But the way that we stay off the hook is to keep finding people who are either sinful, evil, wicked, and/or sick, weak, and in pain; people who are starving to death, who have lost their homes in an earthquake, etc., etc. We become fascinated with other people's pain and suffering.

A week ago a freak tornado hit this area (upstate New York), and eight or nine children were killed in a schoolhouse. Then that is all we would hear about on the news. Day after day after day it was all about the mourning of the people, the funerals, the interviews with the surviving children, the teachers, and the families. It became maudlin after awhile, and the fascination with it, once again, was that everyone's hearts went out to these families. Obviously, it is a very difficult lesson; but what is going on is that we want to see them as suffering. Everyone, whether they say it or not, is thinking "I'm so glad it was their children who were killed and not mine." Obviously, those are not thoughts that we would allow into our awareness, but why would we be so preoccupied with other people's pain? That is the question we have to answer. Why would we be so preoccupied with other people's pain and loss if we did not make it real? If there is no pain, no loss, and no body out there, but we are seeing it out there, it must be because we want to see it all out there. In a movie theatre everyone knows there aren't any real people on the screen; but there is an illusion of real people. If we find ourselves getting upset or feeling happy or sad about a movie, the reason is that we are identifying with what is going on. Everyone knows nothing is going on on the screen; it is going on in the mind. If we identify with it; we make it real.

Well, it is exactly the same with the movies we perceive every day in our waking life. If we are preoccupied with other people's pain and suffering, mourning and loss, it must be because we want to be preoccupied with that. Why?-so that we can feel grateful to God that He punished them and not us: It was not my children who were killed in that school; it was not my daughter who was killed in the fire in the amusement park. It was someone else's. And I thank God because He spared them.

What Jesus is teaching us is that there is no love or gratitude there, because all we are seeing is separation. But if we are seeing it there, it is because we want to see it there and do not want the pain to be in ourselves. If it is not going to be experienced in me, which my ego tells me is the only way I can be safe, then it has to be some place. I therefore take it from within me and dump it onto you. Then it happens and I hold on to it, because I want to keep it in you. I want to keep the loss in you so it is not in me.

Elaborating on the idea of true empathy, you do not empathize with the weakness in the other person, the ego, but with the strength of Christ. This is not about form—it is not about the world of form; but in no way does that mean that you turn your back on others. The Course is not saying that. What it is saying is that you recognize that the pain from the lack of heat or the lack of food or from this or that, is coming from the belief in being separate from God. That is not usually what you say to someone who is starving to death. You join with that person on the level he or she can accept, which normally is to give that person food or warmth or whatever. But in your mind, you are aware that what you are really doing is joining. And it is that joining that appears to be on the level of the body that is really done on the level of the mind. That is what undoes the source of pain.

If you just give someone food because the person is starving to death, you have taken care of the immediate physical problem as it has been perceived. But you have accomplished nothing if your mind has not changed, because you haven't done anything with the real cause, which is the belief that the person has been separate from God. By simply feeling sorry for you, I am reinforcing the fact that, yes, indeed, there is something wrong with you; and I have something you do not have, and I am going to give it to you. Now on the level of form, that is true—I have something you do not have. But what I really want to give you is what I have and you have, which is the Love of God. I do not say that in words, necessarily, if your mind is not focused on that. But in my mind, that is what I am doing. It is love sharing with love. It has nothing to do with giving something that you have and I do not have, or I have and you do not have, because then all we are doing is trading off and stealing back and forth from each other.

The world always judges what problems are going to be sympathized with and remedied, and what problems are not going to be. Just look at what goes on in Washington with all the different lobbies. Every lobby represents an interest group that says our problem is the worst one; we want you to take care of our problem. There are emotional lobbies, and everyone who either suffers from or identifies with a particular disease or circumstance is lobbying at the heartstrings of the American people or the world at large and saying, Help my cause! And there are certain causes that bring out more sympathy than others, obviously. A little child who dies brings out great sympathy. But when a vagrant on the street dies, we look the other way and dismiss it, because "it happens all the time."

We always pick and choose. That is a giveaway of course, because that shows us that we are not seeing everyone as the same. We are saying some people are more worthy of our love, sympathy, and money than other people. That does not mean that in the world of form you have to pay attention to every single suffering person and group. With the limitations of the world and the body as we made them, that is not possible. But when you find yourself giving to a particular person, whether you are giving materially or simply as an expression of love, be aware that that does not necessarily exclude anyone else. It is just that we all have particular lessons and classrooms, and so those are the forms in which we have to demonstrate the fact that giving and receiving are the same, and that we are not different. But when you find yourself joining with or identifying with a particular group or a particular person who is suffering, and that becomes a real thing for you, then know that it is the ego you are listening to and not the Holy Spirit.

The real cause of our getting so upset at other people's suffering and pain is our secret delight that it was they and not us: "There but for the grace of God go I"—we thank God because we were spared. There is no love in that. What that also does, which gets us a little away from our topic, but it is important, is that by identifying with others' weaknesses and feeling sorry for them, we are really denigrating the power of their mind that chose this particular form of classroom in which they could learn a lesson. What we are really saying is that their pain is causing us intense pain, and we want them to stop their pain. We will try to stop their pain, not because we care about them, but because their pain reminds us of our own pain: I cannot bear to see your pain because it reminds me of my pain that I cannot bear to experience. Whenever you have an investment in stopping someone else's pain, it is never loving. It is always because you want to see pain in that person and to do something about it in that person, not for his or her benefit, but for yours. Again, you depreciate or denigrate the power of the person's mind that has chosen this.

The way Jesus loves us in the Course, which is the only real love, is that he does not change the effects. He does not take away our fear. He reminds us that we are the ones who made fear, and that by joining with his love, we can take away our fear. That is what he means when he says, "I do not come between your thoughts and their results because that would be tampering with a basic law of cause and effect . . ." (T-2.VII.1:4). That would be depreciating the power of your mind and would go directly against the purpose of this Course, which is to get you back in touch with the power of your mind. We have all abdicated that center seat, the part of our mind where we make decisions. We sit in the left-hand side which is the ego, and then we become that ego: we believe we are the innocent victims of forces and powers beyond our control. Then we have to make the best of a situation that is already pretty bad.

What is healing and truly loving is for us to become part of a process that reminds us there is a center chair that we abdicated. Since we are the ones who moved off it, we are the ones who can move back onto it. That is the purpose of A Course in Miracles. It is not to take away the pain that we experience within this body, but to remind us that the pain is coming from our denial of the power of our mind and our misuse of that power. Where in the past we made the faulty choice of sitting with our ego instead of with the Holy Spirit, we can now go back to that choice point and make another choice.
What a loving person helps us do, is realize that we are responsible for the situation we are in. That does not mean that you preach this idea to someone who is in a lot of pain, but it does mean that you are aware of it. When you join with others, when you help them on the physical or psychological level on which they experience the need, what you are really doing is joining with them in your mind. That undoes the basic message of the ego system; namely, that we are separate. That is what we feel grateful for. By reminding others of who they are as a child of God, we are reminding ourselves of that same identity. That is what is loving; that is the real source of gratitude. I am grateful that you have reminded me, through our relationship, that you and I are not different. My ego will keep telling me that we are different. But, now, through listening to the Voice of the Holy Spirit, I am aware that you and I are the same. That is the source of my gratitude.

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

**(W-pI.195.5:4) Let us not compare ourselves with them [the ones who seem to be worse off than we are], for thus we split them off from our awareness of the unity we share with them, as they must share with us.**

That is a very clear statement. When we feel sorry for the homeless or the drunks on the street, people who are suffering and dying from AIDS, or the people's families who were destroyed by this or that occurrence, we are splitting ourselves off from them. Then our gratitude is only of the ego: it was you, not me. The real gratitude would come from this type of awareness: you believe you suffered a loss, and I was tempted to identify with your suffering, but I can realize now that you have not suffered a loss anymore than I have.

Loss is only of the body, only of the ego. Christ has never lost; God has never lost. Using Jesus as an example, he did not lose his life on the cross. The life that seemed to be taken from him was not there in the first place. What made him different from all of us is that he knew he was not his body, so what was done to his body was totally irrelevant.

These principles can be applied to any situation where loss is perceived. Students have asked, for example, how they can be of help to mothers who feel intense anger toward God because their sons have died of AIDS. My response is that basically there is nothing in A Course in Miracles that would tell you how to behave with these parents or what to say to them; but what you want to do is be aware within yourself of the part of you that tends to identify with their loss, their pain, or their anger at God. So before you would worry about what to say, you should first be aware of the part of you that is tempted to join with them on the level of their pain—to make their pain, loss, and their anger at God real. If you truly want to be helpful to them, which also means to be truly helpful to yourself, then what you want to do is help them get in touch with their feelings and not do or say anything that would make them squelch their feelings or push them down. You want to help them get in touch with their anger and their guilt. A part of their guilt would have to involve their feeling that "my son died and I didn't." But that is exactly what they wanted - that he die and they not die, which would result in their feeling even more guilty, because their wish became fact. Thus, you want to help them deal with their guilt, whatever the anger is, whatever the feeling of loss is.

Then at some point you comfort them, not so much by your words, but simply by your actions—the message that you love them. You do not have to try to change their thought system for them. All you want to do is be a presence that does not judge them, anyone else, or their sons. Simply love them. That is all you do. It is very simple. Then whatever words are to be said will just be said; and it will not matter. What you want is to be that loving presence. That is what heals. It is a reminder that their thought system is not real. You want to be for them what Jesus is for all of us.

It makes living in this world much easier and much simpler when you can recognize that every problem is the same, and that you do not have to pay attention to what is going on on the screen—because nothing is going on on the screen. You do not have to pay attention to what you are hearing about on television or reading about in the newspapers, or what is going on in your own personal world. Pay attention, though, to what is going on in your mind, because there is nothing else. There is nothing outside you. When you can, change your film from the ego's one of victimization, pain, suffering, and fear, to the Holy Spirit's, which is one of unity, love, and real gratitude. That is all you do. That film will automatically come through your projector, and you will automatically say the loving and helpful thing. Thus, it is always our mind that we pay attention to. That is where the gratitude comes in. We see an outpicturing of what is in our mind in terms of how we perceive another person.

Going back to the story of the school that was hit by the tornado . . . If you are feeling angry or guilty about it, or if you are feeling sorry or even glad about it, just be aware of that. Then you will be grateful, because it will become another opportunity to learn what is within your own mind. You will be grateful to the loving presence of Jesus or the Holy Spirit next to you Who helps you look at it that way.

In interacting with people who have strong feelings about situations involving great suffering—the starving children in Africa, for example—it is helpful to recognize that having such an investment is an important part of their defensive system. As we have been discussing, because of our identification with the ego, we need to find people "out there" who are suffering, to demonstrate that we are not the ones suffering. Thus, if I have an investment in doing something about the starving children, and you do not validate the tragedy I perceive, you are really threatening my defensive system. I would then be angry at you, because you are not supporting a thought system that I desperately need for self-protection. Your not supporting me in that then becomes the beginning of a questioning that can go on in my mind, which, if I were to follow through on it, would mean the end of my ego. Thus, my ego would not like it one bit if you were not upset with what I am upset about.

That is basically the same discussion Jesus makes in the text when he talks about his own life, about why people hated him and killed him (T-6.V-B.1). It was because he did not support their thought system. A being of love and peace has no place in this world, which is a place of hatred and attack. Therefore, someone who comes in and represents and manifests God's Love is seen as an enemy. That presence of love is a direct attack, from our point of view, on our thought system, because it does not validate it. That loving presence is now the problem, and the solution is to get rid of it. That is what the world tried to do; the world not only tried to get rid of him personally, but then it took his teaching message and got rid of that, too.

We see the same dynamic occurring sometimes with sickness. If, for instance, I am involved in a relationship with you, I never believe I get enough love from you, because in the ego system, there is never enough love. So I come up with a way to get more love from you: I will get sick, and then you will have to take care of me and be attentive to me. That is one of the reasons we get sick. It is called secondary gain. Now, if I perceive that you are not playing the game, I will become quite uncomfortable. The reason I invested so much pain and suffering in my sickness is to get your love and attention, but now you are not giving me the love and attention the way I want, because the way I want the love and attention is through guilt, not genuine love. Who wants genuine love? That does not mean anything to me. So don't give me that stuff. I want some good, solid guilt-love. I then get angry, and when it does not work, I get even sicker. Then I will top it off by dying on you. Then I will show you. Then you will really feel guilty.

There is a wonderful line that says just that in the section called "The Picture of Crucifixion," one of the most powerful sections dealing with the insanity of our choosing to suffer and to be sick so that we get someone else. Here is the line: "Death seems an easy price, if they can say, 'Behold me, brother, at your hand I die.'" (T-27.I.4:6). I will gladly die. That is a meager sacrifice if I can really get you for that. If I can get you to really feel good and guilty and sinful, then boy, I will die all the time—because then when I die and God is about to punish me in hell, I will say, "Wait a minute. I'm not the one—she is." And so that is an easy price! I got a good deal!

That is the insanity of this thought system. Everyone does it. That is why it is really clear that there is no place for gratitude in this world. Why would you be grateful for someone who is literally seen as your enemy - who wants to kill you just as quickly as you want to kill him or her? Insanity!
. . . . . . .

Now we come to a wonderful line that is a nice summary of our discussion thus far.

**(W-pI.195.6:1) We thank our Father for one thing alone; that we are separate from no living thing, and therefore one with Him.**

We do not thank God for the wonderful things that have happened to us, or because He killed off another family, not our own. We do not thank God for anything like that. What we thank God for is the simple fact of Who He is, because that tells us who we are. God is perfect Oneness, perfect unity, perfect Love. Since we are part of God, an extension of His Love, we are also an extension of that Oneness and unity, and so is everyone and everything else. We thank God not for a gift He has given us, as if there is a subject and an object, a God Who gives something to another. We thank God for His gift, which is simply the gift of His own Being, which is our own as well.

Sometimes you can have the experience of something coming through you—when you are writing something or composing music, for example; you know that it is not you, that your ego self is not the source. The gratitude you would feel then, for it to be genuine gratitude, would have to be based on the awareness that what came through you also comes through everyone else, so you are not separate from any living thing. If it turns into gratitude for the "wonderful gift" God gave you, then you get caught because it is based on some kind of specialness. In other words, a great composer, painter, poet, or a great anything is no different from anyone else. It is just that we experience love through them in a specific form. Since we live in a world of multiplicity, we have to have that love come in different forms, because we do not recognize it all the time. But the trap is in identifying it with the form or the specific person. Thus, if you are grateful to someone for having brought something into the world—e.g., Mozart for his music—it would be because his music would awaken in you a sense of the love that embraces everyone.

Let me make a comment now on the phrase "all living things," which can be very confusing when it is put side by side with the statement, "There is no life outside of Heaven" (T-23.II.19.1:1), and many others that say essentially the same thing—that nothing here is alive. The Course says that the body does not live; it does not die; it does not get sick; it does not get well. The body literally does not do anything. And yet it uses this phrase "all living things" from time to time. That is another example of how Jesus in A Course in Miracles is not strictly consistent with his language. Very often he uses words, not because they represent something that is true for him, but because they represent something that webelieve in.

In Lesson 184, actually in this same series of lessons, Jesus talks about how the Holy Spirit uses all the forms and symbols of the world, not because they are real, but because we believe they are real and that is how we can communicate with each other. Jesus therefore is really talking with us on the level of our own experience. Since we believe things here are alive and that they victimize us, he is talking about an attitude of gratitude for all living things, which really means all the objects we perceive on our screen. It should not be taken as literally true, because then you would have a terrible problem with all the other passages that say nothing here is alive—just as he says in a number of places about time, as if there were a past and there is a future. The preceding lesson is "I place the future in the Hands of God." Well, how can there be a future? God does not know of time. But because we believe in time, Jesus talks about it as if it were real. It is the same thing here in terms of gratitude for "all living things."

In the context of a question that comes up frequently, this applies to both animate and inanimate beings because there is no animate or inanimate. How can you have an illusion that is real and another illusion that is not real? That makes no sense. So Jesus is saying that we should be grateful for all the things that we perceive outside us and believe to be real, because they offer us the opportunity of recognizing we are all the same. No one object is greater or less than another, more alive or less alive, more sick or more healthy, richer or poorer than another, etc. All of the comparisons we make outside in terms of the way we view and judge our world are nothing more than projections of the original judgment and comparison we made when we compared ourself to God and did not like what we saw.

Once again, the only gratitude we should feel is not for anything that God or Jesus do for us, or that anyone in the world does for us. The ultimate source of our gratitude is that God is Who He is. And because He is Who He is, then nothing that exists, nothing that is outside His Mind exists at all, which means everything else is simply an illusion—that this is not a world that is here. Separation is simply a silly idea that had no consequences or effects, and that we have never left our Father's house. As the Course says at one point, we are at home in God, yet dreaming of exile (T-10.I.2:1), and that all the pain and suffering that any of us has ever felt or will feel is simply part of that dream, and the dream has had no effect upon reality; namely, that we have never left home. Since we have never left home and our home in Heaven is a place of perfect unity - not really a place, of course - then we are united with everything, and everything that appears to be separate and fragmented from us here in this world is part of the same single mind that we are. That is what our gratitude is for.

In this context, a person was wondering whether his gratitude was authentic when he thanked God after doing a good job at work. His gratitude seemed to come from a feeling connected with something internal as well as with other people. Now, you know it is authentic gratitude, as opposed to the ego's form, when it does not separate you from other people or from God. If the feeling of gratitude is the sense of union with Him and His Love as well as with everyone else, then you know it is the real thing. That would basically be the correction, the undoing, or the reversal of what the ego would have us teach, which is basically specialness, which is always based on differences and comparisons. In this world such gratitude would certainly be appropriate, and that is why the Course talks so much about it.

There are many passages in A Course in Miracles, especially in the text, where the basic teaching stops and Jesus suddenly addresses God and thanks Him (see for example, T-28.IV.9). The gratitude that Jesus is expressing to God is on our behalf, a gratitude for our being as Christ. In this world, when we feel His Love and His peace flowing through us, I think the most appropriate reaction would be one of gratitude.

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

**(6:2) And we rejoice that no exceptions ever can be made which would reduce our wholeness, nor impair or change our function to complete the One Who is Himself completion.**

The important idea here, and also an important theme of A Course in Miracles, is that there are no exceptions to this. If you recall the early workbook lessons, which do not appear to be the profound teaching that they really are, there is an important underlying message in them. One of the crucial instructions in those lessons is to let our thoughts or our eyes wander around, but being sure that we do not exclude anything. When the lesson says, "Nothing I see in this . . . room means anything" (W-pI.1), "These thoughts do not mean anything" (W-pI.4), etc., it does not mean that we must include everything as we do the exercise; it means we should not deliberately choose not to see or think about something.

The idea, which is not only the aim of the Course but of any teacher, is to help the pupil generalize what is being taught. Certainly the goal of psychotherapy is to have the patient learn what the lessons are in the specific context of the problem areas, but then to be able to take those principles and generalize them to all situations. The whole idea of A Course in Miracles is to have us practice with this relationship and that relationship, this situation and that situation, until finally we get the idea that the principle of forgiveness holds for everything and everyone, without exception.

When we are tempted to exclude a certain person or situation from our forgiveness—holding out certain things, places, or people to be feared, or an idea that there are certain things that we covet and need, such that if we do not have them we will feel lack and incompleteness—that indicates that there is a spot of darkness in our mind that we are protecting from God's Love. That spot of darkness stays buried in our mind, gets projected out, and takes the form of letting God's Love flow through us with every situation except this one. This particular exception would be an expression or projection of the tiny spot of darkness.

Again, a true experience of gratitude would embrace all people in all situations, even if it may be specific to a particular one. But when you are grateful to God because the circumstance worked out nicely, or because a loved one pulled through a critical operation, then you know you have gotten caught. What that means is if the opposite occurred, you would not be grateful. That is exclusion. In other words, for forgiveness to be complete, pure, and what it is, it must rest upon every circumstance, every thought, every event, every person—without exception. Then become aware that that is not the case. You are not going to do this overnight, so you become aware that you are willing to forgive another for what he or she did here, but not there. Or you will forgive this member of our family, but not that member. Just be aware that that is what you are doing.

When you catch yourself excluding, and can observe yourself withholding God's Love from a particular situation, simply say there is a part of you that is afraid of giving God everything, and that you feel that if you were to give Him everything and hold nothing back, you would disappear. Thus, your holding on to a particular grievance, anxiety, or symptom is your attempt to say to God or to Jesus that you will give Him this much, but not everything. Do not try to change that or force anything upon yourself. Just step back with Jesus next to you and observe yourself doing that. Most importantly, do not try to rationalize, justify, or spiritualize your holding on to the grievance, the anxiety, the anger, or the disappointment. Simply acknowledge, "Of course I feel this way; look what happened to me!" "Of course I still have trouble with this particular area, because look what happened to me at the age of three!" There is nothing wrong with that, but just be aware that it really is an attempt to keep the love of Jesus away from you. What also is implied in this statement is that when you exclude your love from a certain part of the Sonship, you are really excluding that love from a certain part of yourself. You are keeping yourself incomplete and imperfect, which again becomes a denial of the completion and perfection of God.

**(6:3) We give thanks for every living thing, for otherwise we offer thanks for nothing, and we fail to recognize the gifts of God to us.**

"Living thing," again, should not be taken literally; the phrase refers to what we judge to be living in the world. So when we offer thanks for every living thing, every circumstance, and every person except . . . , then the gratitude is not complete, and we are really not thankful for anything, because we are saying God's Love is not perfect, not all-inclusive.

**(7:1-3) Then let our brothers lean their tired heads against our shoulders as they rest a while. We offer thanks for them. For if we can direct them to the peace that we would find, the way is opening at last to us.**

One helpful way of understanding this passage is to recognize that everything people do that is not loving—whether it is something self-destructive, which we usually feel sorry for, or is clearly an attack upon others—comes from their feelings of despair, hopelessness, weariness, and fear. They are calling out for help.

Despite the seeming magnitude of the anger or the attack, no one would attack who really felt secure in God's Love and peace. If that is true for you, it must also be true for me. I recognize that your call for love is no different from my call for love or my call for help. I am as weary of this world as you are. Therefore, your call for help, your calling out for the Love of God is met by my helping. I simply let the Love of God flow through me. By my response of not attacking and not condemning you, I am really saying that you can rest your tired head on my shoulder. By my doing that for you, I am also doing that for me.

Another way of understanding that even more clearly is to imagine yourself resting your tired head on Jesus' shoulder, who then asks you to let your brother rest his tired head on yours. If you refuse your shoulder to that person who is calling out for help, you are also refusing that same help for yourself, from Jesus. You would do that only because you had judged yourself as unworthy of Jesus' love and/or feel terrified of his love, so that you do not want to get too close to it. By my denying my shoulder, my comfort, and my love to you, what I am really doing is not so much attacking you as attacking me. It is an attempt to keep Jesus' comfort away from me, too. When I do allow you to rest your weary head on my shoulder and not attack or condemn you—which is what that means—then I am welcoming Jesus in. It really has nothing whatsoever to do with you, even though that is the form in which I would experience it.

There is a wonderful line at the beginning of Chapter 20 in the text, which was written on Palm Sunday in Holy Week. Jesus quotes the famous line from the parable of the last judgment in Matthew's gospel (25:35). He says, "I was a stranger and you took me in, not knowing who I was. Yet for your gift of lilies, you will know" (T-20.I.4:3-4). What Jesus is talking about is that when I welcome you into my heart, and I forgive you for what you have not done, then I am also welcoming Jesus in. Even if I am not thinking about him, it does not make any difference, because by letting go of the veils of bitterness and judgment that I placed between you and me, I am letting the Love of the Holy Spirit become real for me. Since Jesus is the manifestation of that Love, then by letting go of the barriers that I placed between you and me, I am also letting go of the barriers I placed between myself and him.

It is very helpful when you find yourself attacking someone, being critical of someone, finding fault with someone, or not being grateful for someone, to remember that what you are really doing is not only excluding this person from your own self and your own love, but you are doing the very same thing to yourself in terms of Jesus. If nothing else, that would at least cause you to stop and ask whether this is really what you want, because by continuing to feel unfairly treated, what you are really doing is keeping the love of Jesus and the Love of God away from yourself. All you have to do in that circumstance is be clear that that is what you are doing. Do not try to change it—simply see yourself in the movie theater with Jesus next to you, watching what you are doing on the screen, without changing it. It is the watching it without judgment that lets it go. It was the not looking at it, being afraid of it, and feeling guilty over it that made it real in the first place. So it is the looking at it that lets it go.

The second and third lines of this paragraph are about offering thanks for our brothers. The thanks and the gratitude are not for what others do for us, but rather for the lessons of forgiveness that we learn in the context of the relationship with them. By my love and my comfort—which really means the absence of judgment—and by my expression of gratitude for the relationship, I direct you to the peace of God that is within you. By my accepting that peace within myself, I remind you of it; which reinforces it with me. That is one of the key principles of this course, that the way we learn the meaning of forgiveness is to teach it. What strengthens my awareness that there is a loving presence of God within my mind is to represent it and manifest it to you. The way I manifest it to you is not by something that I actually do, not by something that is positive. I manifest the Love of God within my mind to you by the undoing of the negative. You do not have to bring the Love of Jesus or the Holy Spirit to anyone, because that Love is already within your mind, and minds are joined. It is already within everyone. What you want to do is let go of the barriers to the free flow of that love.

**(7:4) An ancient door is swinging free again; a long forgotten Word re-echoes in our memory, and gathers clarity as we are willing once again to hear.**

This passage has a series of words and a feeling tone to it that are reminiscent of many other passages in the Course that speak of an "ancient door," a "long forgotten Word," something that re-echoes in our memory, a forgotten song (T-21.I), etc., which is really talking about what appears to be an ancient Presence in our mind, the Holy Spirit. We have sealed it off and have covered it with eons and eons of wearying years, centuries, and millennia all in an attempt to conceal that Presence, that Love from us. The Course frequently talks like this, which suggests an ancient past, because we believe that time is linear. So in a sense if we count the existence of the world as millions of billions of years, then we are talking about an original instant that does seemed buried in an ancient past.

In reality, it is not buried in an ancient past; it is buried within our mind because time is not horizontal: past, present, and future. Time is vertical, so the ancient memory is still within our mind right now. That ancient past is not past in the usual sense; it is simply buried because of our fear. That fear is there because our ego has told us that if we get in touch with God's Love and listen to His Word, we will be destroyed. Whenever you see Word of God capitalized, it is almost always a reference to the Atonement principle, the correction of the Holy Spirit, or forgiveness. Our terror of that is so enormous that we just push the whole thing down, and then literally build a world of time and space above it, to keep that ancient Voice silent.

When we can begin to join with another person and begin to not take that person's attacks seriously and personally, we are then learning not to take our attack seriously, because God does not take it seriously. In fact, He does not even know about it. We are beginning the process of letting go of our guilt, and if we let go of our guilt, we are also letting go of our fear of God's punishment.

The initial step of that whole insane thought system is the belief in being separate. If I can allow myself to join with you, to feel grateful for your presence in my life—because that presence is a way of reminding me who I am—then what I am doing is undoing or reversing what the ego has told me, namely, that separation is not only real, but is salvation. That is why there is such an emphasis in A Course in Miracles on joining with other people and not seeing another person's interests as separate from our own. Again, it is that experience of gratitude that epitomizes the act of joining, and it "gathers clarity as we are willing once again, to hear." In other words, it is something that becomes stronger and stronger as we continue to choose to forgive.

**(8:1-2) Walk, then, in gratitude the way of love. For hatred is forgotten when we lay comparisons aside.**

Hatred and comparisons are one and the same. Hatred comes from attack as does attack from hatred, and attack is always based on the idea that you have something I do not have, so I have to get it from you. It always comes from making judgments. The word forgotten is a commonly used word in the Course, and the idea is that we have remembered to hate. Hatred is not something that has been given to us; it is something we have chosen. We have chosen to remember the hatred and forget God's Love. We then try to reverse that process and remember God's Love and forget the hatred.

**(8:3-4) What more remains as obstacles to peace? The fear of God is now undone at last, and we forgive without comparing.**

This is a reference to the sections on the obstacles to peace in the text (T-19.IV), and the final obstacle is the fear of God. What holds all the obstacles in our mind as defenses is some aspect of separation, guilt, or pain, some aspect of the belief in death, and certainly some aspect of the fear of God. They are all really different levels of the same basic thought system. What holds that insane thought system together is seeing other people as separate from us, making judgments of other people, seeing opposition as real, making comparisons, and certainly not feeling grateful for the people and the circumstances in our life

**(8:5) Thus we cannot choose to overlook some things, and yet retain some other things still locked away as "sins."**

This is the same idea we just saw, that for forgiveness to be complete and to be what it truly is, nothing can be omitted. Until we reach the point when we can make that universal and generalized response, we just practice on individual circumstances and relationships. We do not have to forgive everyone in our life in one fell swoop. We can just start with a particular person or a particular circumstance.

**(8:6) When your forgiveness is complete you will have total gratitude, for you will see that everything has earned the right to love by being loving, even as your Self.**

The Self of course is Christ. The gratitude at that point is simply an expression of God's Love in this world. The gratitude Jesus felt would not have been gratitude as we would feel it, because he had no ego that had to be let go of; there was no ingratitude in him. Until that point, however, we have to practice gratitude. It has to be something we learn, because we are so ungrateful in our hearts. We feel ingratitude because situations are not working out the way we think they should, or we feel ingratitude towards certain people because they do not treat us the way we think they should. Therefore we have to have a correction for that, just as we first have a grievance and then a miracle; an attack and then a forgiveness; a sickness and then a healing. Likewise, we first feel the lack of gratitude toward someone or a situation, and then we correct it. The basis for the correction is the recognition that if I withhold my gratitude towards you, I am withholding my gratitude toward myself. And if I withhold it toward myself, I also am not seeing Jesus' love as being real and something that I deserve.

**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-pI.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.
. . . . . . .

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 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?

**Part XIV**

We continue with Helen Schucman's prose poem "The Gifts of God," page 119.

**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, [he is addressing us at this point] we will see nothing but the gifts of God reflected in the shining round our heads.**

The place where we bring our ego's gifts is our mind, which Jesus refers to elsewhere as an altar. At that point we look on them with Jesus' love next to us and let them go. In their place are the gifts of God, the gifts of love. Then Jesus becomes for us a repository of those gifts.

If you are not comfortable with Jesus as a symbol, use the Holy Spirit or any other symbol that works for you. It is important to at least recognize there is another teacher in your mind who represents God for you. At that point we see nothing but the effects of the gifts of love, which in the language of A Course in Miracles would be Christ's vision. This is not anything we see specifically or physically; rather it becomes an attitude or a thought system within our minds that is now extended through us. Others can still be doing all the hateful, murderous things they were doing before, but now we will not experience them that way. We will experience what they are doing as a call for the love and the light within them that they have forgotten. Through the love that is now within us, we will see that love. It does not mean we will see it physically, but we will experience that love and that light within us. That is 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 ...**

Again, the expression of thanksgiving and gratitude is simply the acceptance of God's Love. It does not mean that we turn to God and say, "Thank you." What it does mean is that we turn to God and stop saying, "No thank you." That is what the Course means when it says that "the task of the miracle worker thus becomes to deny the denial of truth" (T-12.II.1:5). You do not have to tell God that you love Him; you stop telling Him that you hate Him. You take the denial of truth, which is that we hate God because of what He has done to us, and you deny that. You say that that is not the truth. The denial of truth is the ego's use of denial. To "deny the denial of truth" is the Holy Spirit's use of denial, which simply means that we deny that we denied the truth.

Gratitude is really the undoing of the negative. The way we would express that is in thanking God, because that is a symbolic way of undoing all of our "No thank you's" to Him. Our telling God that we love Him is simply a way of saying for ourselves—not to God, because God does not hear words—that we no longer hate Him. Then the experience of love would become reality for us.

By the same token, telling Jesus that we love him is not necessary for Jesus' sake; it is necessary for our sake because we spent so many lifetimes and eons running away from him. To tell him that we love him and we are grateful for his help and the ongoing presence of his love in our mind is an expression of our turning away from the ego and towards him.

**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.**

This is referring to the images of God that we have made—this wrathful, vengeful, bloodthirsty Father Who wants only for us to be destroyed. The images are all the fearful projected images we have made of everyone else. First we made up this awful image of God as a Person Who is going to destroy us. The terror involved with that is so absolutely awesome that there is no way of dealing with it. Therefore, we just split it off, deny it, project it out, and then make up a world in which everyone else is out to get us. That paranoia is simply a reflection of the original paranoid thought that God is going to destroy us. If we make God into a hateful Father and Creator, then we must also do the same thing with His creation. Every living thing in the world then becomes a symbol of God's hatred. We secretly believe that every living thing is out to get us. Even those people we judge to be our friends we do not trust. Once we can really express our gratitude to God for being our Source, then the image of Him must change, but also the image of the world must change for us, too.

**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.**

These lines are taken from the scene in the gospel, where Jesus is on the cross and is reported to have said, "It is finished," commending his life into his Father's Hands. The ego told us right at the beginning that if we get too close to God and place ourselves in His Hands, He will destroy us. So in no way are we going to commend our spirit into the Hands of God, as that would be instant death. Thus, Jesus' statement here undoes and corrects those insane beliefs, reflecting the theme of Lesson 194, "I place the future in the Hands of God." We do not have to be afraid of God's punishment or His wrath, because God loves us.

The Son of God "seemed to lose his way a little while," but he never left the safety of God's Love. In the language of the parable of the Prodigal Son, which is used later in this prose poem, the Son of God seemed to wander in a far country, a long, long way from home. Then, as the Course explains, we simply dream of exile, but we have never left our Home and God (T-10.I.2:1). The Course would teach us that the ego says we lost God and Heaven. What that really means is that we have lost the awareness of God and Heaven. Losing something does not mean it is gone; it means we do not know where to look for it. The Love of God has not been taken from us; it is not lost forever. We just forgot where to look, because the ego tells us if we look within our mind, we are not going to find the Love of God; we are going to find the enormity of our sin and guilt, and we will be destroyed. The ego says not to look within for our salvation; look without in the world.

We thus keep looking in the world for what will save us and make us feel good. We feel grateful when we get what we want and not grateful when we do not get what we want. And even when we do get what we want, after a while we will find it was not enough anyway. We always need something else, something more. Salvation is always seen as some form of the body. Anything that we feel will make us happy involves something of the body, whether we are talking about the physical body or the psychological body. It is something that the world can offer us. That is why A Course in Miracles says we "cannot even think of God without a body" (T-18.VIII.1:7). All of our notions about God are not about the real God, because the real God is totally abstract. The real God does not even know about us. That actually is good, because if He did know about us, He would be as insane as we are, because we are not even here. Remember, the definition of insanity is believing in something or seeing something that is not there. If He knew about us here in this world, He would be insane, because there is no world. How can you know about something that does not exist?

Our images of God certainly depict Him as knowing about us. Either He is angry at us and wants to punish us, or He feels sorry for us and then requires payment. We thus strike a bargain with Him where we will give Him something. We will tell Him how wonderful He is, we will read His holy books, say His holy prayers, and do His holy rituals. In exchange, He will forgive us and welcome us back home, but only on condition that we do what we are supposed to do. This obviously has nothing to do with the real God, but it does have to do with the ego's God.

An important part of the Course's entire thought system is that even though God does not know about us and cannot enter into our insanity with us, the memory of His Love came with us into the insanity of separation. When we fell asleep and began this whole insane dream, we took with us into the dream the memory of God's Love. That is what the Course means by the Holy Spirit. The memory of God's Love is always there waiting for us. When we join with that memory, which is another way of talking about joining with Jesus, it gradually becomes who we are. Just as we so identified with the ego's system that we became the ego's system, the other side works the same way. As we increasingly identify with the Holy Spirit's vision, the Holy Spirit's Atonement principle, the Holy Spirit's Love, we become that Love. When we attain the real world, we become like Jesus, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. There is one passage in the Course where Jesus talks about himself as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, and he asks us to be his manifestation in the world (C-6.1:1; 5:1-4).

When we have looked totally at the ego system and laughed at it, it disappears, and all that is left is the Love of God. That is the memory, not only of God's Love, but of our Identity as Christ. We become that Christ. In that sense, we can use the word Jesus Christ to define Jesus, because he has no other last name. We have a lot of other names, which are all the different identities we take as egos, but he has no other name. He becomes the Christ, just as we can become the same Christ and will become the same Christ when we awaken.

Another way of understanding why we should feel grateful to him is that he holds out to us the memory of who we are. We not only have forgotten, but in some part of our mind we believe we will never get that back. There is a line in the Psychotherapy pamphlet that says, "And who could weep but for his innocence?" (P-2.IV.1:7), which means regardless of its seeming form, the source of all of our pain and suffering is our belief that we have thrown away the innocence of Christ and will never get it back again. That is what the ego has told us, and that is why we just keep searching endlessly and hopelessly in this world for something that will make us feel good. We never truly succeed.

Our gratitude should be to the one who tells us that we will never succeed because we are looking in the wrong place. Jesus tells us, "Come over here with me, and when we look together, we will find it." In that case, we seek and we do find. As the Course explains, the ego's maxim is seek and do not find (T-16.V.6:5), which is what we always doing. We are always seeking to regain that lost innocence, but we are looking in the place where it can never be found. The world was specifically made so that we would never find the innocence of Christ. The innocence of Christ is not buried in the world, and it is not buried in our brother's body. The laws of chaos talk about our belief that the reason I am not innocent is that you are, and you stole it from me. Then as the Course says, you hid it in your body because I would never think to look for it there; but if you have hidden it in your body, then I am justified in killing your body and stealing my innocence back. (See T-23.II.9-11)

That is what we do, and just keep doing: I steal from you, and you steal from me. Whether we talk about the innocence of Christ or the power of Christ (another form that goes on in the world), we are always trying to get power in order to steal power. This goes on whether a person does it as a dictator, a general, a president, in a spiritual context, or in an economic context in order to be the richest person in the world and therefore control the world. There are all different ways of trying to get power outside as a way of compensating for the power of Christ that we believe is gone. Of course, it is never enough.

No dictator is ever satisfied. Hitler took the Sudetenland; then he wanted Czechoslovakia; and before long he wanted all of Europe, and then the whole world. We know, too, that no matter how many billions of dollars someone gets, it is never enough because we always need more and more. No matter how many times you tell me that you love me, it is never enough, because that is fine today, but I have to hear it again tomorrow. It can never be enough, because it can never fill up the hole inside because the hole is bottomless. The only way to get out of the hole is to rise about it, to rise above the battleground, look back on it, and realize that there is no hole there. There is no lack; there is nothing deficient in us; there is nothing that is incomplete. The whole thing is made up.

Once again, our gratitude is to God Who represents the truth that none of this ever happened, and that we have the abundance of Christ because He created us. Our gratitude is to Jesus who represents for us the thought system that corrects the one we made. And finally, we are grateful to each other, because the projections of our self-hatred onto others give us the opportunity to realize it is not others that we hate; it is ourselves. It is at that point that we can accept the experience of gratitude, that as the passage says, "The gifts of fear, the dream of death, are done." All that kept the gifts of fear and the dream of death alive was our belief that they were true. When we can look at them and realize they were simply childish toys and had no effect at all, they are gone. Imagine Jesus as the little boy in the fairy tale who looks at the emperor and says the emperor has no clothes on. That is the ego—the emperor—and it has nothing on. It is a thought system that is literally based on nothing. Recall from the clarification of terms that the ego is nothing and is nowhere (C-2.6). We all believe that the ego is something and is some place: some place is in this world, and the something is the reality of our thought system. Those are the clothes that the ego puts on: the clothing of judgment, ingratitude, hatred, fear, loneliness, misery, death, suffering, pain, etc. Then Jesus comes along and says, "Look, you guys. Look. There is nothing there. You made it all up." That is why the world had to kill him—because the world is the emperor's clothing, and so to be told there are no clothes is to be told there is no world. Our egos do not like to hear that, but that is what A Course in Miracles says, and that is certainly what Jesus did. In fact, you can understand what Jesus did in terms of his own life, because the most powerful suit of clothing that the emperor has is death. That is what proves the body is real. Therefore Jesus tells us there is no death—it does not mean anything. And the world said, Okay, big shot, we will see if it does not mean anything. So they killed him, and nothing happened.

That is what the message of the Course is. Jesus is saying to us, "Look, the emperor has no clothes on. All the terrible things you thought you did, or that the world has done to you, have had no effect whatsoever." That is the same message we are supposed to give to each other when people seem to attack us, betray us, be treacherous to us, steal from us, be unfaithful to us, criticize us, judge us, and do all the awful things that people do all the time. Instead of saying, "Behold me, brother, at your hand I die" (T-27.I.4:6), what Jesus would have us say is, "Behold me, brother, at your hand I live" (T-27.I.10:7). In other words, nothing you do has any effect upon the life of Christ or the life of love within me. In that sense, we should feel grateful to each other for giving and receiving that message. This means we must abandon our investment in this thought system, of always being right, and a feeling that we have been unfairly treated by the world.

That is how the passage closes: "And we give thanks. And we give thanks, Amen." The gratitude is the gratitude that comes from the letting go of our investment in the ego's gift.

**Part XV
"Attainment of the Real World"**

We turn now to a series of four paragraphs from the section "Attainment of the Real World" in Chapter 13.

**(14:1) Whenever you are tempted to undertake a useless journey that would lead away from light, remember what you really want . . .**

This is another expression of an idea found throughout all three books of A Course in Miracles, a practical guideline about what we should do. The important thing is to recognize what the "useless journey" is, a phrase the Course uses earlier in the text to talk about the crucifixion (T-4.in). Aside from the places where it is obvious that Jesus is talking about his own crucifixion, the term crucifixion is used as a synonym or symbol for the ego thought system, and thus becomes a symbol of attack, destruction, murder, victimhood, persecution, etc., all of which go hand in hand with every aspect of the ego.

An even more inclusive understanding of "the useless journey" would be that it refers to anything the ego tells us will help, anything that is part of the ego's plan for salvation, or anything that the Course calls magic—anger, for example. The ego tells us that anger is a wonderful way of avoiding responsibility for our own guilt and having to deal with the horror and pain of our self-hatred. We just project the inner belief that we are no good onto another person. In that sense, the useless journey is a journey away from where the problem really is. One of the ways that the ego attempts to deal with itself is to have us take the problem away from the answer, the answer being the Holy Spirit's Presence in our minds, which is the correction for the problem of guilt in our minds. The ego, not wanting to have us listen to the Holy Spirit—because listening means that we will never again listen to the ego—then takes us away from our minds out into the world and the body. Our attention then is always riveted outside us rather than inside.

Our gratitude to each other develops when we shift our attention from the person out there in the body back within the mind where we then look at the person through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. The useless journey is what takes us away from the guilt in our mind, which also takes us away from the love that is in our mind. The useful journey, which is not a phrase the Course uses but is the same idea, would be anything that takes us back within our mind. That is what the miracle does. The whole purpose of A Course in Miracles is to have us recognize all the useless journeys we take, which are our investments in being angry and ungrateful, judgmental and critical, in feeling unfairly treated, getting sick, being in pain, and seeing any aspect of victimization or separation outside us. The idea is that we would recognize that, and then realize that that is not what we want. We really all want peace.

The egos in us tell us about different ways of getting peace, which of course do not lead to true peace. We do not want to feel pain and guilt, and we all want peace; we just do not know how to attain it. One of the key themes in the Course is to have us look at this ego thought system for what it is, without trying to sugarcoat it or pretend it is someplace where it is not. It is never in another person out there; the ego thought system is within us. Therefore, whenever we find ourselves being upset, angry, disgruntled, disappointed, critical, feeling unfairly treated, or feeling a lack of gratitude and appreciation, what we should do is step back and look at that—continuing with the image we have been using—to see ourselves in a movie theater and looking at ourselves on the screen. Instead of turning to the ego or feeling that we are the ego looking at this, we need to turn to Jesus next to us. At that point, we look at what we are doing and ask the question, which is inherent in the act of looking: Is this really what I want? Do I really believe that by beating up on another person and being filled with judgments and complaints that I will feel better? We can then recognize that that is not going to bring us the Love and the peace of God. Therefore, this little prayer is a reminder:

**(T-13.VII.14:2) The Holy Spirit leads me unto Christ, and where else would I go?**

The ego tells us the Holy Spirit does not lead us to Christ; He leads us to hell, to a vengeful God Who will destroy us because love crucifies. This statement corrects that ego untruth.

"... and where else would I go?" The Course explains that the ego takes us is nowhere, literally (C-2.6:6-7). It begins with an illusion and then gives us a solution that is itself an illusion. The ego literally takes us nowhere. It tells us it is taking us to reality: i.e., this world; and then it tells us how to make a wonderful place out of this reality—our bodies are going to get healthier and stronger; we are going to do better and better things with our physical and psychological bodies, and with everyone else's body. We are going to build a better society, a better world, etc., and yet all of this is no place and nowhere.

Yet, the one place that we do want to go to is Christ, because that is Who we are, and in fact that is where we never left.

**(T-13.VII.14:3) What need have I but to awake in Him?**

This statement comes in the context of the preceding paragraphs that spoke about the Holy Spirit meeting all of our needs. What it is saying is that we have no needs in this world except the need to forgive or to awake in Christ, forgiveness being the way we awaken. An earlier passage in the text says that "the only meaningful prayer is for forgiveness, because those who have been forgiven have everything" (T-3.V.6:3). Thus, from the Course's perspective there is no point in praying to God, the Holy Spirit, or Jesus for help with specific problems because there are no specific problems. Our need is to recognize there are no specific problems, that all the so-called specific problems are simply smoke screens to confuse us about what the real problem is, which is that we listened to the wrong voice at the very beginning. What enables us to listen to the right voice is to forgive, and forgiving is what enables us to awaken from this dream. In the context of our theme, the way we forgive is to experience gratitude for the people in our lives, not necessarily because of what they do for us, but because of the opportunities they provide for us to forgive ourselves.

Once we choose to turn to the right mind, listen to the Holy Spirit's Voice, and begin to grow so that we become that Voice, we become the manifestation of His Love, just as Jesus has done. Then we follow Him in joy. We realize that true joy does not come from hitting someone over the head or making ourselves sick to offer atonement to God, but from being able to look at our guilt and learning how to smile at it.

**(T-13.VII.15:1) Then follow Him in joy, with faith that He will lead you safely through all dangers to your peace of mind this world may set before you.**

The dangers to our peace of mind would be all the different thoughts the ego has given us: the horror of our guilt and self-hatred, and that we deserve to be punished. These thoughts get projected outward so that it appears as if there are external dangers in the world and that the world has set these before us. If this sentence is taken out of context, it sounds as if the world sets these dangers before us. In truth, the world does not do that. We tell the world what to do to us, and then we forget we are the ones who told it. The so-called dangers in the world, all of the problems in the world, are nothing more than reflections or projections of the basic problem in our own mind.

The Holy Spirit does not lead us through this world. He leads us from the world back within to our own minds. That is literally what the miracle does, and that is why this is called A Course in Miracles. It is a course in how to look at our problems differently. Our problems are not what appear to be outside. The miracle takes our attention, which has been focused on another person or some problem in the world—whether in another's or our own body—and basically tells us that that is not where the problem is. The problem is not outside the mind, because there is nothing outside the mind. The problem is within our minds. It is the same idea as sitting in a movie theater and having something go wrong with the film so that it looks funny on the screen. No one rushes up to the screen to try to fix the film. You go back and fix the projector or the film. No one in his right mind would go rushing up to the screen because everyone knows there is nothing on the screen except some projections of light. But that is exactly what we all do; we go rushing up to the screen. The miracle says the problem is not on the screen; it is in your mind; that is the projector. The problem in your mind is that you have chosen the wrong film. No wonder it looks funny on the screen! It is a film of horror, death, pain, sickness, and suffering that appears to be pleasant at times but in reality is not. The role of Jesus or the Holy Spirit is to remind us not to go rushing up to the screen when we find ourselves getting uncomfortable in our seats, because there is nothing on the screen. He tells us the problem is in the projector, in the wrong-minded film chosen to go into the projector.

Still once again, the reason the Course is saying we should feel grateful to the circumstances and the relationships in our lives is that they first bring out the discomfort in us. As we are sitting watching what is going on in our lives and all of a sudden we become uncomfortable, anxious, fearful, guilty, depressed, or whatever, Jesus tells us the source of the discomfort is not what is on the screen. But if we did not feel uncomfortable because of what is on the screen at first, we would not know that there is a problem. What goes on the screen brings to the surface and into our awareness the discomfort we are feeling. Now that we are aware of the discomfort, we know there is another presence, another thought in our minds that tells us what the true source of the discomfort is. There is a passage in the text that makes just this point:

**(T-27.VII.7:3-4) Once you were unaware of what the cause of everything the world appeared to thrust upon you, uninvited and unasked, must really be. Of one thing you were sure: Of all the many causes you perceived as bringing pain and suffering to you, your guilt was not among them.**

This is saying that as we are sitting in the theater and feeling discomfort and pain, we all have rushed to the screen to try to find the cause. If you are a doctor, you look for the germs that caused sickness, or something that is wrong with an organ. We are always looking for causes outside. As this passage is saying, of one thing we were sure, that of all the many causes we perceived as bringing pain and suffering to us, our guilt was not among them.

The value of relationships in our lives is that they bring to the surface this pain and suffering. Our first instinct or reflex is to rush to blame the cause of our pain on someone else. What A Course in Miracles helps us do in a process that occurs over a period of time is to recognize that that is not why we are upset. "I am never upset for the reason I think" (W-pI.5.h). Jesus and the miracle remind us that the reason is in our own mind. That is why we should feel grateful, not only to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus, but to the circumstances in our lives.

**Part XVI
"Attainment of the Real World" (cont.)**

**(T-13.VII.15:2) Kneel not before the altars to sacrifice, and seek not what you will surely lose.**

The ego's plan for salvation—to lead us away from God into nowhere—is through sacrifice, where we always have to give up something. This is not the major theme of our discussion, but the way we protect ourselves in this world is through the special relationship bargain, where we have to get something from others in order to survive. And the way we get what we want from others is to give them something, because we have to pay them for what we are stealing from them. That is the notion of sacrifice, what the Course refers to earlier as the ego's law of "giving to get" (T-4.II.6:5). If I am going to get something from you, I have to give you something in return.

In the ultimate sense, this is what we all believe we have to do with God. We all have been taught that to get God's Love and forgiveness, we have to give Him something, a gift of our sacrifice and suffering. It is clear that Christianity is not the organization or institution that invented this, nor did Judaism. No institution invented it. The ego invented it right at the beginning, and the institutions of the world have simply reflected in form the basic content that is in everyone, which is that the only way we can receive what we want is to give up something for it. There is not a free and loving exchange; it is always some kind of bargain where we want to give up and give to others as little as we can, but get as much as we can from them. That is the idea of sacrifice, and that is why the ego tells us God's Will for us is perfect misery, not happiness. God wants us to suffer because we are such terrible persons.

**(T-13.VII.15:3) Content yourself with what you will as surely keep** [the gifts of God's peace and Love, rather than the gifts of the ego]**, and be not restless, for you undertake a quiet journey to the peace of God, where He would have you be in quietness.**

The ego's journey is anything but quiet and peaceful. It is always full of conflict, tension, and struggle, because the ego itself is a thought of conflict, tension, and struggle. It is a thought of the warfare between itself and God, and that is why being truly peaceful and quiet has no place in the ego system.

**(T-13.VII.16:1) In me** [this is Jesus speaking to us] **you have already overcome every temptation that would hold you back.**

If we join with Jesus and turn to him as our teacher, brother, and friend, then we have already overcome all temptations to listen to the ego. That is almost by definition, because to turn away from Jesus is to be that ego. To turn toward him is to turn away from the ego and everything that the ego would have us do: the temptations to hold on to grievances, not to forgive, to make judgments, to feel sorry for ourselves, etc.

**(T-13.VII.16:2) We walk together on the way to quietness that is the gift of God.**

The ego tells us God's gift is war and destruction, not quietness and peace.

**(T-13.VII.16:3-4) Hold me dear, for what except your brothers can you need? We will restore to you the peace of mind that we must find together.**

This is one place among many in A Course in Miracles where Jesus is asking us to take his hand and hold his love close to us, to turn to this other presence in our mind, a loving presence that represents a totally different thought system. If Jesus is a difficult symbol, then we should substitute another. What is crucial is that we not turn to the ego or to ourselves for help—we and the ego are synonymous.

The major theme of the Course is that in joining with Jesus we are also joining with each other. By joining with each other, we are joining with him. There is no difference. It is impossible to join truly with another person and let go of all the barriers—grievances, anxieties, and guilt associated with that person—without joining with Jesus. Remember, we do not have any choice other than to join with the ego or with Jesus (or the Holy Spirit). There is no other option. If we are going to join truly with another and let go of our ego's belief system, then we are automatically joining with the Holy Spirit or Jesus. Likewise, if we join with Jesus and ask his help in a situation, we are automatically joining with the other person, because it is impossible that anything his love would guide us to do would be separating. There is no difference. That is why lines like this appear: "Hold me dear, for what except your brothers can you need? We will restore to you the peace of mind that we must find together."

**(T-13.VII.16:5) The Holy Spirit will teach you to awaken unto us and to yourself.**

Here Jesus is really talking about the Holy Spirit as our Teacher. In reality, of course, the Holy Spirit's and Jesus' Voice are the same. The "us" here is Jesus and our brothers.

**(T-13.VII.16:6-7) This is the only real need to be fulfilled in time. Salvation from the world lies only here.**

This is kind of a fairy tale way of talking to a little child. Jesus is making it very clear that we really have no needs in this world except the need to awaken from this dream, the need to join with each other and forgive. That is the only need, and if we feel there is something in the world that has to happen and we have an investment in it happening, it is always because we feel there is something missing in us. If I am in a relationship with you and I want the relationship to change the way I want it to, it is always because I feel I have a need that has to be met. Our focus should not be on asking the Holy Spirit or Jesus to help us fix something out there, because that is to fix nothing. If we have already agreed that there is nothing out there and the ego is nowhere, then why bother to have the Holy Spirit tell us we should fix something that is not even there? That would be the same thing as asking help of the person who works the projector to fix the screen because the movie is not showing right.

The film that is running through our machine is a film of guilt, attack, sacrifice, and certainly of ingratitude. That is what has to be looked at. Our only real need then is to fix our thought system. That is the only way we can be saved from the world. You cannot be saved from the world by doing something with the world; unless you are insane, that is, because you would be doing something with a world that does not exist.

**(T-13.VII.16:8-9) My peace I give you. Take it of me in glad exchange for all the world has offered but to take away.**

This is the same theme that is in the prose poem, "The Gifts of God," where Jesus is continually saying to us, "My gifts are going to make you much happier than your gifts or the gifts of the world. Take my gifts instead." The reason this is such an important theme here is that all of us have believed on some level, whether individually or not, that Jesus' or the Holy Spirit's gifts are anything but peaceful, that They are going to destroy us, and that if we give everything over to Jesus, we will have nothing left. That is the control issue or the authority problem—that there will be nothing left of us. That is true, but who says that our individual self is such a good deal! Paraphrasing two passages, Jesus says to us, "Resign as your own teacher, for you have been badly taught" (T-12.V.8:3; T-28.I.7:1). Yet we keep insisting that we know what is best for us; this self that is really nothing, we think is a great thing to be worshipped, revered, protected, and idolized, etc. Or if we do not feel that way about ourselves, we certainly feel it about someone else's self whom we want to incorporate. The whole idea is to be able to give up any sense of self.

An important theme of the Course is to realize that we do not know what is in our own best interests (W-pI.24). Prior to his discussion of the ten characteristics of a teacher of God, Jesus says a teacher of God is someone who no longer sees another's interests as separate from his own (M-1.1:2). There is no sense of me and you. The idea of kill or be killed is that you have your interests, I have my interests, and they are not always the same; my interests are more important than yours. There is always a conflict.

Jesus is saying, "My gift, my peace, is much more valuable to you, because my peace is going to make you happy if you exchange it for all the gifts the world has given you. Even if you have gotten the gifts the world has promised, if you look at them openly, you would realize that they are nothing."

**(T-13.VII.16:9) Take it of me in glad exchange for all the world has offered but to take away.**

The world really wants us to sacrifice and give up things. The gifts of Jesus are there for us only to help us, not to hurt us or anyone else. Once we accept it within our mind, the love that comes from our mind joining with his extends through us into the world. It does not mean literally into the world, because there is no world. The world is only a representation of our thoughts. While we each have our individual thoughts, so we think, these individual thoughts and the individual mind are simply part of the collective mind. The Course says, "When I am healed I am not healed alone" (W-pI.137). That is why Jesus says we arose with him (C-6.5:5)—because all minds are joined. It is the joining of the mind in love that is the real world. When we all do it as one, that is what the Course calls the Second Coming, the end of the collective dream. Thus, Jesus is saying here not that the world is going to be covered, but the thought of love now is going to be spread throughout the mind of the Sonship.
(T-13.VII.16:10) And we will spread it like a veil of light across the world's sad face, in which we hide our brothers from the world, and it from them.

This is an image that seems to refer to something external, but it is really the love that we have accepted in our mind, which is now joined with Jesus, a symbol of God's Love in our mind. That love will extend through us. That is what Jesus means in the workbook when he says, "For this alone I need; that you will hear the words I speak, and give them to the world. You are my voice, my eyes, my feet, my hands through which I save the world" (W-pI.rV.in.9:3). Obviously, he does not mean saving the world outside. He is talking about saving the world from the thought that there is a world outside.

Within the dream that thought of love has to be experienced, so we need symbols. Jesus himself was such a symbol, but he is not here in the body any longer. So now he needs our bodies to be symbols of his love, just as his love was the symbol of the Holy Spirit's Love. When we join with him, this light of love will spread and radiate throughout the Sonship, dispelling the veils of hate that kept us separate from our brothers, and through projecting our guilt, keeps them apart—in our minds—from the world of forgiveness.

**(T-13.VII.17:1) We cannot sing redemption's hymn alone.**

The ego's redemption hymn is that we do it alone, because to the ego, salvation or redemption is to be alone. The primary thought of the ego is: "I am on my own. I do not need God; I can do this by myself. Therefore, I do not have to be grateful to God or to a Holy Spirit or to anyone else, because I can do it on my own." Salvation then depends simply on my doing it on my own. Certainly that has been a major theme of many spiritualities in the world; that is, that all I have to do is be alone with God; I do not need anyone else. I just go and be alone with God, which would make sense in terms of the idea that God is in my mind and is not outside. But the way it often has been practiced is more reflective of the idea that I do not need anyone else, and no one else counts. All that counts is that I have a wonderful, beautiful, powerful, and mystical experience of God. Then the world does not matter. That is not what the Course is talking about. It seems to be similar, but the attitude is much different.

That is why gratitude is such a major theme in A Course in Miracles—that we be grateful, not only to God and Jesus or the Holy Spirit, but for the world itself, not because the world is real, but because the world is a classroom in which we learn that it is not real. Redemption's hymn cannot be sung alone; it has to be done through a spirit or an attitude of joining with Jesus and everyone else.

Another way of understanding this, in terms of the undoing of the ego system, is that in the ego's thought system, the way I am saved is by taking my unconscious guilt and dumping it onto you. It does not matter to me what happens to you, because now I am free of it. That is another way of saying all that matters to me is me, not you. It is like a seesaw effect. In order for me to go up on the seesaw, you have to go down. That is what we do when we project. We believe magically we have gotten rid of our sinfulness and guilt by giving it to others. In exchange, we have stolen their innocence, so now we are the innocent ones, and they are the guilty ones. Remember, the ego's system is always one of differences. If I am guilty then you must be innocent. But if you are guilty then I am innocent. The way I ensure that you are the guilty one is by continually dumping my guilt onto you; I attack you, and make judgments of you. Therefore, why should I be grateful to you?

The undoing of that is realizing that I cannot get to Heaven by stepping on you. I can only get to Heaven by walking withyou. That is what the Course means when it says, "The ark of peace is entered two by two" (T-20.IV.6:5), "Salvation is a collaborative venture" (T-4.VI.8:2), and "We cannot sing redemption's hymn alone." It does not mean that to do the Course you have to walk with someone physically, or that you have to have a lover or a spouse, or an employer who is a pain in the neck. It does not mean anything like that, because relationships exist in the mind, not in the body. You usually do not have to work hard at finding someone that you have to forgive.

As many people have observed, the ego's world is a world of opposites. Newton held that for every action there is a reaction, a theory that would seem to come right out of the ego thought system. And one way of understanding how different the Course is to contrast it with other kinds of spiritualities such as Taoism that talks about yin and yang, or with Jung's theories that talk about reconciling opposites and bringing them together. A Course in Miracles is saying you cannot reconcile what does not go together. What you do with love and hate is recognize that love is not love and hate is not hate, either. Both are illusions. In other words, you raise yourself above the battleground or above the opposites. And it is in doing that that they are reconciled by disarming. Neither of them is true; but in the ego's world, they are—absolutely. This is a world of opposites. In fact, that is what the ego's birth is. The ego looked at God and said, "We are not the same; we are different; we are opposite. One is the Creator; one is the created. And I am going to see to it that I am on top." That is the original seesaw.

**Part XVII
"Attainment of the Real World" (conclusion)**

**(T-13.VII.17:2) My task is not completed until I have lifted every voice with mine.**

This makes it sound as if this is a task or function that Jesus has to fulfill, like the general who does not get paid until everyone is brought home. Obviously, this is a metaphor. What he is saying is that if we are all one, then in this world, the presence of love has not been fulfilled until everyone awakens from the dream. It is not that he saves some people and not others; that is the real point here. The traditional view of Jesus is that at the Last Judgment some are going to make it and some are not—the parable about the sheep and the goats. What he is saying here clearly is that everyonegets home, not just some.

**(T-13.VII.17:3) And yet it is not mine** [it is not Jesus' voice]**, for as it is my gift to you, so was it the Father's gift to me, given me through His Spirit.**

It is really not his voice, because it is the voice of love, and the Voice of Love is God's. Yet each of us joins that voice. One of the images the Course uses from time to time is the hymn of a chorus singing. There is an especially beautiful passage at the very end of the text, which is a nice prayer of thanksgiving as well. Jesus addressing God:

I give You thanks for what my brothers are. And as each one elects to join with me, the song of thanks from earth to Heaven grows from tiny scattered threads of melody to one inclusive chorus from a world redeemed from hell, and giving thanks to You (T-31.VIII.11:4-5).

The idea is that the whole Sonship is a chorus that has been so fragmented into different voices that it seems almost impossible that it began as one chorus and will yet end as one chorus. Basically, Jesus is the chorus master who is going to draw together all these different voices and blend them into the unifying song of thanksgiving so that it is all one voice. That is called the song of prayer in the supplement of the same name. It is not my voice, it is not your voice; it is not his voice. It is the voice that when we are totally one, transcends the sum of its parts. The Course says elsewhere that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (T-4.III.1:6). What makes this chorus what it is is not each voice adding up one by one. It is a totally unifying element of all the voices, the blending together of one voice that transcends the sum of its separate parts, including Jesus' part.

**(T-13.VII.17:4) The sound of it** [the sound of this voice of love, or redemption's hymn] **will banish sorrow from the mind of God's most holy Son, where it cannot abide.**

What we all did in that original instant when we turned our back on the Holy Spirit and listened to the ego instead was welcome sorrow into our minds and banish joy. We basically drowned out this incredibly lovely hymn and chorus with a cacophonous sound filled with discordance and dissonances. That is what we told ourselves was beautiful. What the Course explains in many different places, especially in "The Laws of Chaos" (T-23.II), is that in this world we believe these are laws of order. It is only when we really look at them and understand them that we realize this world is not founded upon laws that make sense—they are really laws of chaos. Things do not work perfectly. We have the illusion that they do, but that is a chaotic brain that has been programmed by a chaotic mind to believe that chaos is order. When chaos looks on itself, it thinks that is fine, because it is like looking on like.

To our chaotic mind and brain, predicated on guilt and disorder, the fact that we are no longer at one with God, which is a disordered thought, now seems comfortable, because that is what we are: a disordered thought. To a disordered mind, an ordered mind is disordered, which parallels the earlier statement that "to the ego, the guiltless are guilty" (T-13.II.4:2). To the ego, which is guilt, to be without guilt is seen as a tremendous threat. It is out of sync, not in harmony. What is in harmony with guilt is guilt. What is in harmony with fear is fear, and what is in harmony with chaos is chaos. What is in harmony with dissonance is dissonance. To a dissonant mind that is filled with cacophonous music, which is what this world and the sounds of the ego are, the unity of the song of prayer, the song of thanksgiving, makes no sense. That appears to be disharmony.

What we all chose in that instant was to drown out that single, gentle voice of love and replace it with a cacophonous sound of pain, sorrow, guilt, tumult, conflict, etc. Then we forgot that we did this, and we feel that is what is normal now. The point of the Course is to have us realize that it is not normal, and that there is another choice, another conductor or chorus master we can choose.

**(T-13.VII.17:5) Healing in time is needed, for joy cannot establish its eternal reign where sorrow dwells.**

You do not need healing in Heaven. That is what A Course in Miracles means in saying that our function in Heaven is creation, but our function on earth is healing or forgiveness (see for example, T-25.VI, W-pI.192). This is the same idea as saying that we do not have to be grateful in Heaven. In Heaven, which is an awareness of the perfect Oneness of God and Christ, there is no Self that can be grateful to another Self. Gratitude and healing are necessary here because of the ingratitude we feel. Since perfect love casts out fear, and light casts out darkness, it is also true that in the presence of darkness, there is no light; and in the presence of fear, the presence of love is obscured. As long as we have chosen sorrow, we will not be aware of the joy of God's Love. That means we have to make the choice against the sorrow, to deny the reality of the sorrow or pain in our minds. Once we do that, then the love and joy that was always there is restored to our awareness.

**(T-13.VII.17:6-7) You dwell not here, but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.**

This reflects the Course's earlier saying that we are "at home in God, dreaming of exile" (T-10.I.2:1). That is what the presence of the Holy Spirit is always saying to us; namely, that where we are is nothing more than a dream; this place, this world, is not our home. There is a perfectly lovely lesson, "I will be still an instant and go home" (W-pI.182), that very powerfully and beautifully talks about the alienation that everyone feels here, knowing that this world is not our home and that we do not belong here. But we have lost our way, and we do not know the way back.

The Course's way to lead us back is to forgive, because it is by changing my perception of you that I am changing my perception of me. We are all terribly lost because we have identified with that thought system in the left-hand chair in our theater and have forgotten that there is any other choice. Somewhere inside us we know that this chair does not fit—we are not really comfortable here, but we do not know anything else. The ego might begrudgingly admit that, but then it gives us the idea that the devil we know is better than the devil we do not know. We may not be totally happy in this body, and we may not be totally happy in this world, but that sure is better than that Holy Spirit guy over there, because that is the real devil. We may not like it here, but it is much better than roasting in hell. Of course the ego never tells us that where we are is hell, and the other choice is really Heaven. We do not know we have another choice. That is why choosing again is such a major theme in the Course. We really believe that we dwell here, that this world is reality, and that eternity is a dream. The answer to how we awaken from the dream is in these two final statements:

**(T-13.VII.17:8) Give thanks to every part of you that you have taught how to remember you.**

The "every part of you" would be everyone in our lives, because we are all part of the one mind. We are all part of the Sonship. You are not separate from me. That is another way of understanding the gratitude being taught toward each other. It is not that I am grateful for what you have done, but I am grateful because you are part of me. You, then, become the reminder that we are all one. My gratitude to you is simply an acceptance of the fact that you and I are both one. We seem to be separate, but we are both one. Again, it is not a gratitude for something you have done. It is a gratitude born of the acceptance of the fact that we are one.

Then the expression of gratitude is that I would not have that memory of the Oneness of Christ if it were not for you in my life, and were it not for the temptation to first kick you out of that unity and exclude you from the Sonship by saying you are different from me. Once I make that judgment and I am aware that it is a judgment I have made not on you but on myself, I can now change my mind about you. By letting you off the hook and not holding on to the grievance against you, I am really recognizing, whether I am conscious of it or not, that you and I are one and the same. We do not share separate interests, and if I want to return home and awaken from the dream, I must do so with the awareness that you are coming with me. Whether you choose to do that or not is irrelevant. Obviously, most of the world did not choose to awaken with Jesus. But in his mind, he did not exclude anyone. He respects the power of our mind to delay that awakening. Whether in the eyes of the world it is a year, a thousand years, or a millions years, it does not make any difference because there is no time.

Again, what we are talking about here is my expression of gratitude to you: "Give thanks to every part of you that you have taught how to remember you." The way that I teach you how to remember the you that is this oneness is an idea that we will see in the teacher's manual. The love and the peace within me is a reminder to you that there is another choice, and that other choice is not separation, but is unity. By teaching and reminding you of that, I am doing the very same thing for myself. That is how I remember God, and that is what the last sentence is saying.

**(T-13.VII.17:9) Thus does the Son of God give thanks unto His father for his purity.**

It is not really a gratitude to God in the real sense, as if there were a God outside to Whom we have to be grateful. Just as I express gratitude to you because you and I are one, I also am expressing gratitude to God because He and I are one. That is the undoing of the original ego thought of ingratitude that God is the Creator and I am not, and that difference is an attack on me. Why should I feel grateful to Him just because He claims He is the Creator? The experience of gratitude for our Oneness is the undoing of that, which restores to us the awareness that we are indeed one. But I cannot know that God and I are one unless I first recognize that with you. Recall the lines from near the end of Chapter 27 that say that our brother represents God to us, Who represents life and death (T-27.VII.15:7). That is the choice.

**Part XVIII
We Always Have a Choice**

Before moving on to the workbook lesson I want to discuss, I would like to say a few more words about the issue of control. We seem to fight to keep control, yet we hand it over to the ego, which seems to invalidate the whole issue.

It is true that we have given over control to the ego, but then we forgot we did so and leave the middle chair empty where the decision maker is. In effect, we now sit in the ego's chair, which means we become the ego. Thus, we now feel we are the control we gave to the ego, having forgotten that we gave it to the ego. If we were to remember that we gave it away, we could take it back. That is another way of understanding the Course's main message, which is that we do have a choice. This is also one very important and helpful way of recalling why we should feel grateful to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus—because Their presence is saying to us that we have a choice.

Let me refer to some passages in the teacher's manual that have to do with healing in terms of what it means to be a teacher of God. The context of these passages is really healing sickness, but what they say would apply to everything. I will start with the second paragraph in the section, "The Function of the Teacher of God." The context is God's teacher representing the Holy Spirit or Jesus in the presence of someone who is sick—physically sick, mentally upset, or just someone who feels he or she has a problem. This is going to explain exactly what Jesus does and then what we are supposed to do in his name. Implicit in this, again, is why it is we should feel grateful to him.

**(M-5.III.2:1) To them** [people who believe they are sick] **God's teachers come, to represent another choice which they had forgotten.**

Our function is not to give them an answer, solve a problem, or heal their symptoms. Our function is simply to represent another choice. The sick person has forgotten that he or she has chosen sickness, which means that that person is sitting in the left-hand chair, having forgotten that he or she began in the middle chair and made the choice to move out of it. The sickness, problem, hurt, anger, suffering, or whatever the condition, is there; but the person has totally forgotten there is a middle chair where the choice was made, and also that there is another chair on the other side, which is where Jesus or the Holy Spirit is sitting.

As your brother in Christ who loves you, I do not fall for the ego's trick, which makes the error real and makes your problem real. In other words, this is an example of true empathy rather than false empathy. I do not feel sorry because your body is so sick and such a terrible thing has happened to you, whatever that may be. I empathize rather with the strength of Christ in you. My loving, comforting, and defenseless presence that does not make your error real—while at the same time I am fully present to you—then becomes the reminder that there is another way of looking at this. Let us say, as an example, that your child was killed in a tornado, or your body or a loved one's body is dying, and you are upset and distraught, and I am with you and am fully loving and present to you, but I am not angry, anxious, or guilty in any way. At that point, what I am doing is manifesting to you that there is another thought system that you can choose. I am representing that thought system. Not only that, I am representing the person of that thought system. That is what Jesus is talking about here: the teacher of God represents another choice, which the sick person had forgotten.

**(M-5.III.2:2) The simple presence of a teacher of God is a reminder.**

To repeat, I do not have to do anything. My loving, defenseless presence has not made the error real. That is all I have to "do." That is the reminder that there is another chair you can choose, and that there is a part of your mind that can choose. You are not your ego thought system. You have chosen to identify with that thought system, but you can make another choice. As the text says right at the end, "Choose Once Again" (T-31.VIII).

**(M-5.III.2:3) His thoughts** [the teacher of God's thoughts] **ask for the right to question what the patient has accepted as true.**

You have accepted as true the fact that you are sick, that you are an innocent victim, and that you had no choice in this whatsoever. And so my loving presence then becomes a reminder that there is something else. In effect, then, my loving presence is asking for the right in you to question what you have made real.

**(M-5.III.2:4-7) As God's messengers, His teachers are the symbols of salvation. They ask the patient for forgiveness for God's Son in his own Name. They stand for the Alternative** [the Holy Spirit]. **With God's Word in their minds they come in benediction, not to heal the sick but to remind them of the remedy God has already given them.**

Again, I do not have to do anything. This does not mean that on the level of behavior I not do something; but within my mind, I do not have an investment in doing something. I no longer feel you have to get well so I will feel better, or so that I will not feel guilty or responsible because you are in so much pain. My love for you is great enough and true enough that I am able to stand by and respect the power of your mind to choose to be upset, without trying to interfere—to tamper with the law of cause and effect. I respect the power of your mind to choose to be angry, upset, critical, ungrateful, and to be in pain. I remind you that you have another choice, but I do not drag you back to the other chair. I do not compel you or force you to choose what I know as true. I do not have to say anything. I simply remind you by my very presence that there is another choice, and that you have the power to choose, but if you choose to stay in pain, my love for you will not change; my anxiety level will not rise, my guilt will not rise. My presence says what you choose is perfectly okay with me.

At no time in A Course in Miracles, if you read it carefully, do you ever get the feeling that Jesus is saying you must do this. He is really saying, "You will feel better if you do this, and I am calling you to come with me, not because I am lonely and want company, but because you will feel better if you come with me. If you come with me, you will be letting go of the ego." That is the same attitude we should have with each other.

Two of the important characteristics of God's teachers described in the manual are gentleness and patience (M-4.IV,VIII). Patience comes from the idea that there is no time, there is no need to hurry in this. No matter how long you take to change your mind, Heaven does not change. That is where the gentleness comes from. I do not have to force you, make you feel guilty, or compel you to be loving. But again, as I am with you, the presence of love and peace within me will be the reminder to you that there is another way, another choice you can make. When you are ready to make it is up to you, but my love for you and my peace of mind does not depend on your getting this.

If you find you cannot do this because your own mind is in the way, then step back and assure yourself, "I really would like to be more gentle and patient with this person, but obviously I am really upset by this person's problem; and obviously I am upset by this person's problem because I am making the error real; I do not want to believe in what the Course is telling me, and that's okay." The gentleness and patience you want to have toward your friend is exactly what you should have toward yourself. That is how we learn then the Holy Spirit's or Jesus' gentleness and patience with us.

**(M-5.III.2:8-10) It is not their hands that heal. It is not their voice that speaks the Word of God. They merely give what has been given them.**

In other words, it is not what we do that heals people—it is not the "holy" words we say, the laying on of hands, the medicine or wonderful advice we give. This does not mean, to stress this important point, that we not do any of that. After all, we live in a world of forms and symbols. We just recognize within ourselves that the healing comes from simply being quiet within our own mind. The Course tell us that we give what has been given us, which means that the peace and love we experience from Jesus' presence in our own mind is the same peace and love we want to have extended to others—whether the extension is simply by having a loving thought about you, putting my hands on you, saying a prayer over you, or giving you medicine. The form does not matter. What I do want to give you is not the specific but the love that underlies it.

**(M-5.III.2:11-12) Very gently they call to their brothers to turn away from death: "Behold, you Son of God, what life can offer you. Would you choose sickness in place of this?"**

All that we do for each other, which is exactly what we want to have done for ourselves, is to represent to others that there is another way, another choice we can make. It does not mean that we say any of these words—most of the time, these words would be meaningless to other people. We really are saying by our love that there is another way of responding to a situation. From our point of view, it does not matter whether others choose to accept the love or not; we do not have an investment in their doing so.

**Part XIX
"It Can Be But My Gratitude I Earn" (W-pI.197)**

Let us now turn to Lesson 197, "It can be but my gratitude I earn" (W-pI.197). This is the second of a two-part lesson, the first being "It can be but myself I crucify" (W-pI.196).

**(W-pI.197.1:1) Here is the second step we take to free your mind from the belief in outside force pitted against your own.**

The first step was teaching us that it is not really you I crucify, but myself. When I appear to be attacking you, it is really myself that I am attacking. Here is the same idea, but now the content is different. The third paragraph gives the explanation:

**(3:1-2) The world must thank you when you offer it release from your illusions. Yet your thanks belong to you as well, for its release can only mirror yours.**

Basically, when I am grateful to you, I am really accepting gratitude for myself. Since there is no one out there, when I crucify you, it is really myself I am crucifying—when I attack you, it is myself I am attacking. At the same time, when I am truly grateful to you, it is really myself to whom I am truly grateful, because nothing that appears outside me is really outside. It is just a projection of what is inside. The principle that underlies both Lesson 196 as well as this one is that what appears to be outside is a projection of my own thoughts. What I believe I am doing to someone outside, whether it is hateful or loving, is really a gift that I am giving to myself. In the section "Holy Week," Jesus says that we stand before our brother with lilies in one hand and thorns in the other (T-20.I.2:6), which represent our gift of either forgiveness or attack; but it is really a gift we are giving to ourselves. That is what is being said here.

Now the lesson talks about false gratitude, or the ego's version of what goes on.

**(1:2-3) You make attempts at kindness and forgiveness. Yet you turn them to attack again, unless you find external gratitude and lavish thanks.**

In other words, I am kind and forgiving toward you, but only for what I can get from you. If I get what I want from you, which is when special love appears to work, then of course I am grateful. If you do not give me what I want, or if you gave me what I wanted yesterday but you do not give me what I want today, then my gratitude turns into attack.

This same idea is expressed in the text (T-16.IV.1-5). When you do not give me what our bargain calls for, then my love for you turns to what it always was: hate. Hate was always there, lurking in the wings, just waiting for the opportunity to come on stage and overtly attack. And when you fail to do what you promised you would do for me, at least from my point of view, then I feel justified in getting angry at you. Of course, all of this is based on everything being external to me: I need something, and when I get it from you I am grateful.

**(1:4) Your gifts must be received with honor, lest they be withdrawn.**

The ego's gifts, the gifts that I feel I am giving you, always have a string attached. I will do all these wonderful things for you, but only on condition that I get something back. There is always a condition, whether what I get back is material, such as money, or psychological, in terms of your affection, attention, gratitude, etc. If the condition is not met, then of course I withdraw my gift. And if this is what I do with you, then it must be that this is exactly what I do with God, because there is no difference in my perception of you, myself, or God. It is all the same. It cannot be that I do for one without doing for the other. Thus, if I am doing this with you, it is because I have done it with God.

**(1:5) And so you think God's gifts are loans at best; at worst, deceptions which would cheat you of defenses, to ensure that when He strikes He will not fail to kill.**

This is the basic ego fear—that when God makes up His Mind and gets around to me, I am finished. I am always trying to stave off this attack that will end with my certain death. What this also means is that having all these murderous thoughts toward Him, I simply cannot believe He would be loving and kind to me. At best, when He appears to be loving and kind to me, it is only a loan, which at some point He is going to call back. If things go well with me today, I am sure that at some point they are going to go terrible. If I make a brilliant business deal and make a lot of money, I am sure at some point I am going to lose it all. Or if I get you to love me and pay attention to me, in no way do I think this is going to sustain itself and work, because I am not worthy of it.

What I originally do with God in my mind is exactly what I do with everyone else. And what I do with everyone else is exactly what I believe I have done with God, except that I am not aware of what I have done with Him. I can be taught to become aware of what I have done with you, however. That is why A Course in Miraclestalks so much about our special relationships—that is a way of pointing out to us the horrible bargains we make and the horrible things we do.

Given all the premises of the ego system, no perception or attitude of gratitude would ever be justified. Why should I be grateful to you if you are going to murder me or steal from me? What comes from this whole thing with God is that I cannot trust Him; I cannot trust what He says. The real reason I cannot trust what God says is that I really cannot trust myself, because I know who I am. I know that I am a deceiver, a betrayer, a cheat, a thief, and a murderer. Therefore why should anyone, especially God, want to love me? Not being able to deal with the horrifying guilt of who I really am, I deny it in myself and project it onto God so that He becomes the One Who is the deceiver and betrayer. That means God is going to destroy me. I cannot deal with that pain and anxiety, so I push it down and project it out. Then it becomes that everyone in the world is a deceiver and a betrayer, and no one can be trusted.

**(2:1) How easily are God and guilt confused by those who know not what their thoughts can do.**

What the ego has always done is to confuse God and guilt. God then becomes a symbol of our sin for which we feel guilty, and our sin and guilt deserve to be punished. We know not what our thoughts can do. Our real thoughts are part of God, and our thoughts can save us. It was our wrong thought, our mistaken thought that caused us to identify with the ego in the first place, but we can change our mind about that. This is talking about the power of our mind, and we all have split off that power of our mind.

Let me elaborate on that. One of the ways the ego has managed to keep its thought system alive and powerful in our mind is that it has made us mindless by causing us to be identified with the body. The ego's motivation for that is very clear. It is the Holy Spirit's presence in our mind that is the greatest threat. The ego knows if we get back in our mind, at some point we are going to focus our attention on the Holy Spirit, and that means the ego is done for. Therefore the ego tells us that love is really not in our mind; hatred and fear are there, and that is the reality. Once we believe that, it takes a second step and teaches us that this hatred is something we can never get near and that we should be afraid of it because in back of our self-hatred is God's hatred of us. That is what is in our mind, says the ego. It then tells us that the way out of the pain of all this hatred and fear is to go out of our mind—which is the definition of insanity—go into the world, and make up a body, a brain, and a world in which we can hide. This world is literally mindless, and we as egos—physical, psychological selves—are also mindless. This means there is no power in our mind, which means we have no further choice.

That is what happens when we abdicate the middle chair, which is the decision maker, and sit in the ego's chair, get glued to it, become part of that chair—in fact, become that chair, become that ego. What we have really done is throw away the power of our mind. That is the meaning of the second sentence:

**(2:2) Deny your strength, and weakness must become salvation to you.**

I deny the strength of Christ in me, the strength of my mind to choose Christ instead of the ego, and now the weakness of my mind becomes what will save me. The weakness of my mind is my denying that there is anything in my mind. I deny that the Love of God is in my mind; I deny that the guilt of my ego is in my mind, and I deny that I am a mind at all. I have blotted all of that out, taken away any remembrance of the power of my mind to choose, and instead believe I am now trapped in this body and brain, and that is who I am and where I am. There is nothing I can do about it. This ends up having us all become helpless victims.

Again, our gratitude is for the help that gets us back into the part of our mind that can choose. That is the source of the deep experience of gratitude and thanksgiving. Indeed, we are not trapped as a helpless prisoners in this world, in a prison we did not make. We are the ones who made it, and therefore, we are the ones who can change our mind about it. That is another way of understanding the purpose of A Course in Miracles: to help us regain the power of our mind and identify with it.

Let me go back over a few lines from the section "Cause and Effect" in Chapter 2 of the text that I quoted earlier:

**(T-2.VII.1:1) You may still complain about fear, but you nevertheless persist in making yourself fearful.**

There is a previous discussion (T-2.VI.4) in which Jesus was basically telling Helen, but obviously all of us as well, "Do not to ask me to take your fear away because you made your fear. But by joining with me, we can remove the conditions that led to the fear, which is the belief in being separate." He is saying we are ones who make ourselves fearful.

**(T-2.VII.1:2-4) I have already indicated that you cannot ask me to release you from fear** [T-2.VI.4]. **I know it does not exist, but you do not. If I intervened between your thoughts and their results, I would be tampering with a basic law of cause and effect; the most fundamental law there is.**

The mind is the cause of all the pain, suffering, and discomfort we experience; which are the effects. Jesus is saying that if he took away the effects and the mind remained unchanged, then our mind is mindless also, because he has to do it for us.

**(T-2.VII.1:5-6) I would hardly help you if I depreciated the power of your own thinking** [the power of our mind]. **This would be in direct opposition to the purpose of this course.**

This was a very clear message for Helen and Bill right at the beginning of the scribing about the purpose of this course: to help them recognize the power of their own minds, the power to choose. Since what got me into trouble as I was sitting in the middle chair was my choice to move to the left chair (the ego), then it can only be by going back to that middle chair, which means going back to my mind to choose, that I can be saved. Jesus cannot save me; the Holy Spirit cannot save me. They can simply remind me of the power in my mind that does save me. I was the one who chose to go in the wrong chair, not Jesus. Therefore, I am the only one who can change my mind. His presence and his function is to be the reminder that I do have another choice. That is what the whole purpose of the Course is: to have us remember that there is a choice.

Thus, going back to the workbook, when Jesus says that we do not know what our thoughts can do, and that is the confusion of God and guilt, he is saying we have denied the power of our minds, the power of our thoughts. That is what the early workbook lesson means when it says that we have no neutral thoughts (W-pI.16). Our thoughts have tremendous power. They do not have any power with God or against God, but they certainly have power within the dream, because the thoughts make up the dream. Our thoughts of guilt, attack, separation, judgment, and ingratitude certainly have very powerful effects in terms of making us unhappy and miserable, or causing suffering and pain. Changing our mind and choosing the Holy Spirit's thought system of gratitude, forgiveness, and joining has tremendous effects, too: it is the way out of pain and suffering.

**Part XX
"It Can Be But My Gratitude I Earn" (W-pI.197) (conclusion)**

Returning to Lesson 197 we read:

**(W-pI.197.2:2-3) Deny your strength, and weakness must become salvation to you. See yourself as bound, and bars become your home.**

If I believe that I am a prisoner and my mind has no power, then my home—the body—in fact does become a prison. The Course says the body "is a limit on love . . . it was made to limit the unlimited" (T-18.III.1.2-3). In other words, the ego took love and stuck it in a prison, the body being the bars, and our mind choosing to identify with the ego, the jail keeper. The entire thing rests on the premise that we are bound. We put ourselves there; but the reality is that we are not imprisoned and are not chained to that left-hand chair that the ego sits in. No one is holding us there except our own thought system, our belief that we have no power. Once we remember that we have power, we simply pick ourselves up and go back to the middle chair. That is all we have to do. It is that simple.

**(W-pI.197.2:4) Nor will you leave the prison house, or claim your strength, until guilt and salvation are not seen as one, and freedom and salvation are perceived as joined, with strength beside them, to be sought and claimed, and found and fully recognized.**

We have to be able to tell the difference between the ego's and the Holy Spirit's plan for salvation. The ego's plan is for salvation from God's Love, and what keeps us from God's Love is guilt and our never questioning the basic premise that it is true. The way we keep ourselves safe from God's Love and out of His clutches is to keep ourselves guilty. Then we keep ourselves from experiencing the pain of our guilt, now that we have made it real, by denying it in ourselves and projecting it onto others.

That is the ego's plan. Guilt saves us from love, and attack saves us from guilt. Then defense saves us from counterattack. This is a brilliant system—a little stupid, but brilliant. It is stupid because it does not accomplish what the ego tells us it will; but it is brilliant in terms of the ego's real goal, which is to keep us in prison, to keep us guilty and fearful, and above all, to keep us away from God's Love.

What we need, then, is a thought system that corrects our thought system. Our thought system tells us that guilt and salvation are one and the same, so we need another thought system—what the Course is giving us—that tells us guilt and salvation are not the same. Salvation and freedom are the same, salvation and guiltlessness are the same, salvation and gratitude are the same, but not salvation and guilt. This means learning how to dis-identify or step aside from the ego's thought system and identify with the Holy Spirit's thought system.

**(W-pI.197.3:1-2) The world must thank you when you offer it release from your illusions. Yet your thanks belong to you as well, for its release can only mirror yours.**

When I can release you by not reinforcing your ego thought system, which I do when I forgive you, then you would feel grateful to me. This would be a legitimate expression of gratitude. If we are having a fight and you are caught in your ego and I in mine, and I suddenly change my mind, then I have ended the battle. If I can recognize that this whole thing is silly—I do not want to be on this battlefield anymore, and we are not on a battlefield at all—then I have ended the battle, because it takes two to have a fight. When I end the battle, I am giving you a message, reminding you that you can make the same choice. When you choose to identify with what I have done, with the love and peace that is now coming through me, there is a part of you that would then feel grateful.

Let me read a prayer-like passage from the text that nicely expresses this. It is from "The Happy Dream" (T-18.V.6-7). In these two paragraphs Jesus is giving us a way out of the problem of being caught in a relationship where there is a lot of fear, and following from that, a lot of guilt, attack, and counterattack. In addition to the theme of gratitude, these passages express the fact that you and I are not different and that we must be the same. If I am guilty, then I am making you guilty; and if I am fearful, I am going to see you as fearful, but I am going to try to deny that that is the case. The ego tells me that we are different, and therefore it is possible for you to be guilty and I innocent. The fact of the matter is that if I am guilty and project my guilt onto you, we are both guilty in my mind. By the same token, if I can forgive you, then both of us are forgiven. It is impossible that I could have a feeling without believing you have the same feeling.

**(T-18.V.6:1) When you feel the holiness of your relationship is threatened by anything, stop instantly and offer the Holy Spirit your willingness, in spite of fear, to let Him exchange this instant for the holy one that you would rather have.**

One important idea expressed in this passage is that it takes two people to have a fight, but it only takes one person to heal. Thus, if I am in a relationship with you and things are really getting out of hand, and we both are angry, depressed, fearful, anxious, and at each other's throats, I just have to realize what is happening. I do not have to realize it for you; I just have to realize it for me—that I have gotten caught in the battleground again, and believe this relationship is a battlefield.

In a later passage where Jesus is describing some of this kind of insanity, he says this is not an army; it is a madhouse (T-21.VII.3:13). What is going on with us is not reality; it makes no sense; and it is not really a battle. The whole thing is insane because I believe you are my problem, and you believe I am your problem. We just fight and try to steal from each other what we believe will save us. And of course, what happens is that both of us remain condemned and imprisoned. At the moment that happens, and I can come to my right mind and realize this is not what I want, I offer the Holy Spirit my little willingness (T-18.IV). That means a little willingness to step back and look at what is going on. I do not have to change it. I do not have to try to change you. I do not try to change my thoughts or my reactions. I just look at what is going on, and if I am looking, it is not my ego that is looking with me. If I am really looking at what is going on, and am honest about it, I have already lifted myself above the battleground to look back down on it. When I lift myself above the battleground, it can only be the Holy Spirit or Jesus Who is looking with me, because the ego is not above the battleground. Obviously, the ego is the battleground.

The minute I stop and offer the Holy Spirit my willingness instead of fear, I have already exchanged my fear for His love, my attack on you for His forgiveness. What I am doing then is saying I have a choice in this matter. I cannot necessarily change what you are doing or not doing, but I can certainly change the way I am looking at you and what is going on. When I do that, what I am really doing is getting up from the ego's chair and coming back into the middle chair, which is the part of my mind that can choose. That is all that is necessary; that is all the Course ever asks.

**(T-18.V.6:2) He will never fail in this.**

The reason He does not fail in this is that it is already done. The Holy Spirit does not do anything. He is simply that Presence of Love that automatically shines away the ego's darkness the minute the darkness is brought to It. The minute I bring to Him the investment I have in our fighting, and say, "Look at what I am doing; I must be afraid of Your Love," the darkness is automatically dispelled. Because I brought the fear to His Love and the darkness to His light, it must disappear. That is the meaning of this statement—that He will not fail in this. If I do not feel any better, it is not because He has failed; it is because I am still holding on to the fear, or anger, or grievance, or the judgment.

All I do is bring that to Him and say, "Oh, I am still holding on to it. No wonder I am still feeling miserable, depressed, angry, or sick—because I do not want to let it go." And that is what I bring to Him. In other words, I just keep being aware of what my ego is doing, what my ego is choosing. But the part of me that is aware of it is no longer the ego. That is what is crucial in all of this.

**(T-18.V.6:3) But forget not that your relationship is one, and so it must be that whatever threatens the peace of one is an equal threat to the other.**

Within my mind it cannot be that you and I are different. This is not talking about what is going on in yourmind, but about what is going on in my mind. If I feel threatened, then I must believe you are threatened. Again, this has nothing to do with you. It has to do only with my perception of you. It cannot be that I see you any differently from the way I see myself, or that I see Jesus or God any differently from the way I see myself. That is what Jesus means in "The Obstacles to Peace" when he says:

**Let me be to you the symbol of the end of guilt, and look upon your brother as you would look on me. Forgive me all the sins you think the Son of God committed** [which would be us, ourselves]. **And in the light of your forgiveness he will remember who he is, and forget what never was. I ask for your forgiveness, for if you are guilty, so must I be (T-19.IV-B.6:1-4).**

Obviously, Jesus does not mean that he is guilty because of his own thoughts. It means that in our mind, if we perceive ourselves as guilty, we must see Jesus as guilty, too: by giving him our guilt, we thereby magically think we become guiltless. It cannot be any other way. That is why the world hates him—because we hate ourselves. So in our mind, not only are we imprisoned in this world, but he is imprisoned in this world with us. In my mind, if I am guilty, sinful, and there is something terrible in me, it must be that Jesus took my innocence from me, which means he is now as guilty as I am. It cannot be, within my ego system, that he is the same as I am. He must be different from the ego system. So if I am guilty, he must be the light of innocence. If he is the light of innocence, and I am guilty, it must be that he took it from me. Therefore, he is as guilty as I am. Therefore, if I hate myself, I must hate him. If I believe in suffering and sacrifice, I must believe he believes in suffering and sacrifice. But then I forget I am the one who believes it, and I blame it on him.

My ego will always try to have me believe we are different, but the truth is we are the same. I then blot out, or deny, or repress the fact that I am the one who believes that. Now it is Jesus, or St. Paul, or God who believes in suffering and sacrifice, not me. Then Jesus says in the next line:

**But if I surmounted guilt and overcame the world, you were with me (T-19.IV-B.6:5).**

However, when I see him as the light of shining innocence, and recognize that we are the same, then I must be the light of innocence, too. What he has done I also have done, because minds are joined. The way I perceive him is the way I perceive myself. The way I perceive myself is the way I perceive him.

**Would you see in me the symbol of guilt or the end of guilt, remembering that what I signify to you you see within yourself? (T-19.IV-B.6:6)**

Again, what we believe about Jesus is like a Rorschach inkblot that will tell us what we believe about ourselves, and vice versa.

**Part XXI
"The Happy Dream" (T-18.V)**

We return now to "The Happy Dream" section, re-reading sentence 3 and then continuing:

**(T-18.V.6:3-4) But forget not that your relationship is one, and so it must be that whatever threatens the peace of one is an equal threat to the other** [that is within my mind]**. The power of joining its blessing lies in the fact that it is now impossible for you or your brother to experience fear alone, or to attempt to deal with it alone.**

This is all within my mind. If you are having the same ego attack as I am, and I am fearful and angry, then obviously I am reinforcing what you believe, just as your being angry and fearful is reinforcing what I believe. If I change my mind, however, then your mind is already changed, because minds are one; but you may not yet choose to accept it. The fact that Jesus had no fear or guilt in his mind, only the Love of God, means that that same presence is also with us. The problem is that we still choose to deny it and not accept it.

**(T-18.V.6:5) Never believe that this is necessary, or even possible.**

This refers to "it is now impossible for you or your brother to experience fear alone, or to attempt to deal with it alone." It does not mean that I have to do something with you. For example, I can be in a relationship with someone who has not been healed and that person dies. That does not mean that I no longer have any hope of healing the relationship. Because minds are joined, I do not need your physical presence or your approval. You do not have to be A Course in Miracles student for me to forgive you and to have the relationship healed, because it is all within my own mind. It could be that I would do or say things to you on a behavioral level, but it would not be my self who is saying them or doing them; whatever it is would come through me.

Our function is to accept forgiveness. The extension of forgiveness through us is not our function. Our job is simply to accept the Atonement for ourselves, to forgive, and to change our minds. What happens after that is not our function; it is the Holy Spirit's function. Love will automatically come through us, and therefore it will be love that will guide us in what we say and do. It is not the ego that does that.

**(T-18.V.6:6-7) Yet just as this is impossible** [that I act on my own]**, so is it equally impossible that the holy instant come to either of you without the other. And it will come to both at the request of either.**

The main point here is that minds are joined. Thus, this does not mean that both people have to agree on a conscious level or feel peaceful and forgiven. It does not mean that the other person even has to know what is going on in my mind. If I am upset with you—which is a relationship that may appear to be external, but is really within my own mind—and I change my mind about you, then the loving thought in my mind joins with the loving thought in your mind whether you accept it or not. In other words, you could still be in the grips of the ego and not be aware at all that I have changed my mind. That is why the Course says earlier that the Holy Spirit holds all our forgiveness or the miracles within our mind until the time we can choose them.

Jesus was just an extension or manifestation of love in the world. How many people accepted it? That did not jeopardize his own Atonement path, obviously. If it were not that way, it would mean that we have to wait for everyone to be holy and healed for ourselves to be healed, which would make us dependent on someone else. That is a way of describing special relationships. Thus, all that occurs is that my mind is healed and then part of my mind is aware that you are healed as well, whether you choose to accept it or not. That is what the teacher's manual means when it discusses healing and asks the question, "Should Healing Be Repeated?" (M-7). The answer is no, because once healing is offered, on the ultimate level it must be accepted since minds are joined. Then it says that to doubt a healing because the symptoms continue seems to be loving and kind, but it is really hateful because it is a way of making the person's ego real (M-7.4:4). Healing is not of the body; it is of the mind. If love is in my mind, then you are healed as well, and my part is complete at that point.

**(T-18.V.7:1) Whoever is saner at the time the threat is perceived should remember how deep is his indebtedness to the other and how much gratitude is due him, and be glad that he can pay his debt by bringing happiness to both.**

On a purely practical level, if two people are fighting in a relationship, at some point one of the two will get the idea that there is another way of looking at this. That is the meaning of "whoever is saner at the time ....." One person will blow the whistle and say this is crazy. Whether that person actually does it verbally, behaviorally, or simply in his or her mind does not matter. But then at least one of the two people lifts him or herself above the battleground and looks back down, at which point the battle has ended.

It does not matter what the other person does or does not do. It only takes one. The one who lifts himself above the battleground will feel peaceful. The person who does not still has the choice. If I am the one who has lifted myself above the battleground, then my peace does not depend upon what you do or do not do. The message I am giving you is what we had described earlier: I become the reminder of a choice you can make—simply by not getting involved with the battle anymore. Therefore, I feel gratitude because it was through my fighting with you that I now recognize I was not fighting with you at all—I was really fighting with myself and with God.

This is purely an internal experience that I believed and pretended was outside me. I would not have known it was inside me if I had not had this terrible fight with you, and you had not done or said what I perceived to be terrible and unconscionable things to me. It is not gratitude for your ego in the sense of what you have done or have not done. It is gratitude for the opportunity that the circumstance has given me to change my mind about myself, recognizing that if I do that, I am also letting you off the hook.

Then I become aware of whether there is still a part of me that does not want to let you off the hook, still believing that you do not deserve my forgiveness because of what you have done and keep doing! I become aware of the part of my mind that does not want to let go, which means I am right back down on the battleground again. I acknowledge that I am right back down on the battleground because I am not feeling totally peaceful. I become aware that I do not want to let you off the hook because I do not want me to be off the hook either. By keeping you outside the love of Jesus, I am keeping myself outside the love of Jesus, too. I am aware that that is what I am doing, and I tell myself that that is what I am doing, and it is okay. It may not be the smartest move in the world, but it is not a sin.

Now comes this little prayer:

**(T-18.V.7:2-3) Let him remember this** [my gratitude to you]**, and say:
I desire this holy instant for myself, that I may share it with my brother, whom I love.**

What is important is my first inclination not to share it with you. I want the peace of God, and I do not care about you; I do not love you. How can I possibly love you? Look what you have done! That is the seesaw idea, that in order for me to feel worthwhile, you must be worthless to me.

**(T-18.V.7:4) It is not possible that I can have it without him, or he without me.**

Here again Jesus is appealing to my selfish motives. He is telling me that I cannot have the holy instant, I cannot have the peace of God, I cannot experience His Love unless I include you in that Love. So for purely selfish reasons I want to shift my perception of you, even if at the beginning I do not believe you deserve it. I want to shift because I realize the way I have been going along is not helping me. This is the end of the ego's idea that I can be better off at your expense, that guilt and salvation are the same, or that attack and salvation are the same. Attack and guilt are virtually the same.

I begin to understand that it is really not you whom I am hating; it is not you whom I am crucifying; it is me! It is an image of myself I cannot look at that I project onto you, and that is what I am attacking. Then I can at least understand that this is not going to work anymore. I may not like it because there is a part of me that is still holding on to the grievance. Part of me is still holding on to the belief that salvation for me depends on keeping you outside the Kingdom. At least now I recognize that this is not going to work, and that is a big first step. It means if the ego is not going to work, then there is another plan that will work. That begins the process of disengaging from the ego's thought system and returning to the part of my mind that can choose. I can now make another choice, and that begins the process of identifying with the Holy Spirit's thought system.

**(T-18.V.7:5-6) Yet it is wholly possible for us to share it now** [this is not something that I am going to reap the benefits of in the future; it is something I can have right this moment]**.And so I choose this instant as the one to offer to the Holy Spirit, that His blessing may descend on us** [not on me, on us]**, and keep us both in peace.**

The key idea again is that I cannot do this without you. Please do not get caught in the trap of thinking that you have to study this material with me, or that you have to be on a spiritual path, or that you have to love God. That is totally irrelevant. All that is necessary is that in my mind I not feel that my happiness and salvation depend on seeing you as the guilty one and myself as the innocent one. Gratitude is born in my recognizing that you are a part of me, because what the ego has done is taken itself, the one mind of the Son, and fragmented it over and over and over again. Thus we have billions and billions of fragments, each one believing that it is on its own, totally separate from everyone else, and certainly separate from God.

What happens now is that I live in a world where everyone appears to be outside me, reinforcing and witnessing to the reality of the ego's thought system that separation is real and unity is an illusion. Suddenly, because I have this loving presence of Jesus next to me, I can look at you differently. I realize that you are nothing more than a projected image of what is inside me. You and I and everyone else are nothing but a projected image of what is within my mind. You and I and everyone else are part of a much larger mind. We are simply thoughts in that mind that believes we are separate. But the truth is that we are all one.

I am grateful, therefore, for the opportunity this world affords me, because now I see it is not a prison, but a classroom. It was always a classroom, but I chose to have the ego be my teacher, which ended up being my jail keeper. It was a prison from which I could not escape. And I am grateful now that I realize I was wrong. There is a phrase that recurs in different places where in effect Jesus says to us, "And be you glad and thankful it is so" (see, for example, T-16.VI.10:6; T-29.VII.1:10; M-14.5:15). We should be glad and thankful we do have another choice, and that the world is not a prison. It is a classroom. We do not have a teacher who is a jail keeper, but a teacher who is a loving presence who will lead us back home. But he leads us back home two by two. Eventually it is four by four and eight by eight, etc.; and then we realize we all go back together.

Of course, what happens sometimes in relationships is that someone will get the idea this is all silly, but then will become stubborn and say, "I realized this first, last week. Now it's the other person's turn. Why does it always have to be me?" Once you are in that state, then obviously you are caught again. If you really feel a sense of gratitude for this other person and for the situation, then you will not turn your back on that gratitude and complain about why it is always you who has to take the first step. If you realize that what you are doing by taking the first step is saving the other person and yourself, then by feeling bad or angry or resentful of having to take the first step, you are depriving yourself of salvation, not just the other person. Perhaps that is the role that you have in the relationship. Big deal. In the end, there is no first or second anyway.

There is a workbook lesson that says, "I choose the second place to have the First" (W-pII.328.h). What the ego hated right at the beginning was that from its point of view it was in second place, and God was first. Therefore it changed it around and stole the first spot from God, then believing it was first. It is always by recognizing I am in the second place, dependent on God, and that is wonderful, that I then have the first place, which means I realize that I am Christ and a part of God. Likewise, if I feel resentful that I am always the one who has to take the first step, and I have to be the one who is sane first, no matter; in the end, we are both one and there is no first and no second.

**Part XXII
"It can be but my gratitude I earn" (W-pI.197)**

We return now to the lesson. It was at this point that I stopped and turned to the paragraphs in the text that discussed the idea of sameness (see previous excerpt).

**(W-pI.197.3:1-2) The world must thank you when you offer it release from your illusions. Yet your thanks belong to you as well, for its release can only mirror yours.**

In other words, when I am grateful to you and am releasing you from your prison of guilt, I am doing the same thing for myself. It must be that way. It cannot be that I do it for you and not for myself, or that I do it for myself and not for you.

**(W-pI.197.3:3) Your gratitude is all your gifts require, that they be a lasting offering of a thankful heart, released from hell forever.**

I do not need the gratitude of the world or the world's acceptance of my gifts, just as Jesus did not need the world's acceptance of his gifts. All that is necessary is that I feel grateful that I can now make another choice. I am grateful that I now know I am not caught in this terrible prison, and there is a loving presence within my mind who reminds me I have another choice. Similarly, when I feel imprisoned by a physical sickness or pain and then the pain stops, there is a part of me that feels so grateful. On a far more important level, it is impossible for me not to feel gratitude if I felt condemned to this prison forever, then suddenly realized I have a choice and can literally be free. It is impossible not to feel a deep sense of gratitude, even though the gratitude is illusory. Remember, forgiveness is an illusion; the miracle is an illusion; the happy dream is an illusion; and the real world is an illusion. Jesus is an illusion. A Course in Miracles is an illusion. So your gratitude is in very good company.

It is impossible to go through a lifetime of self-hatred, guilt, misery, and wretchedness and then suddenly have an experience of knowing you are forgiven and that God loves you and is not angry at you without feeling a tremendous sense of gratitude and joy. That is real joy. It is not a joy that comes from getting what you want from someone. It is a joy that comes from knowing you were wrong and that you are not a miserable wretch. You believed that, but that did not make it true. God loves me, and I am His beloved Son. There is no greater experience in this world. Of course you would feel joy and great happiness! You would feel a tremendous sense of gratitude. This is the gratitude that comes from saying, "I prefer to be happy rather than right, because if I am right, then Jesus and the Holy Spirit must be wrong." Remember, the ego thrives on differences. Thus, if I am right and I know that I am right—that this miserable person did this terrible unconscionable thing to me—then it does not matter what this holy book or this holy person says. I am right and they must be wrong!

In a passage I mentioned earlier, Jesus says that if you are guilty he must be guilty, too; it is the same thing (T-19.IV-B.6:4). But we are not aware of that; therefore, if Jesus is wrong, I must be wrong. The gratitude comes from the belief not that I am right, but that I have been wrong and I am happy I am wrong. That means that God is right, and if God and Jesus are right, then it must be that I am right also. When Jesus tells me that I am a Son of God, then not only is he right, but my acceptance of that is saying I am right, also. I am wrong as an ego, but I am right as a Son of God.

**(W-pI.197.3:4) is it this you would undo** [this thankful heart that knows it is released from hell] **by taking back your gifts, because they were not honored?**

That is what the temptation is. Here I feel I am so loving, kind, and forgiving; I always take the first step to heal this relationship, but I am not going to do it anymore, because you just do not appreciate me. I am so loving and kind, or I work so hard in this office and you do not appreciate me. Therefore, I am not going to feel happy anymore. Yet in my right mind, if I am working in a business, I am not working for your gratitude or appreciation; I am working because it is something that is loving within me. What you do with that gift of love is your business. I have given that gift of love, which means I have accepted it, and it does not matter what you do with it. If I am in a relationship with you and I love you and am kind and concerned, I am not doing it because I want something back. My ego wants that. I am doing it simply because I know I am a child of love, and a child of love can only extend love. What you do with that love is your business, but if I make it my business, I am caught. Then what I am doing is withdrawing the wonderful gift I had accepted, and at that point I am back in prison, for I am saying that you and I are separate, and you damn well better be grateful and appreciative. If you are not, then I am not going to love you.

**(W-pI.197.3:5) It is you who honor them and give them fitting thanks, for it is you who have received the gifts.**

In other words, the gifts of love I give to you have nothing whatsoever to do with you. That is why it is really important for both your understanding and practice of the Course that you realize there is no one out there. If there is no one outside me, it makes no sense for me to demand a response from someone who is not there. The love that I experience in the context of a relationship with you is only within my own mind. But you are within my mind, too. It is not something that my body gives to your body and then wants payment. It is something that is within me. I am the one who judges whether my gifts have been appreciated or not. If I accuse you of not appreciating them, it is because I do not appreciate them. I am really not turning my back on you; I am turning my back on God.

The mistake is in believing that relationships are external and that something has to happen-there has to be some exchange between you and me. If you get caught in that, you are making the error real and are right back into specialness. Specialness is always based on the belief that there is a body. The core theme of all specialness is that we are different. Bodies make us different. Our bodies are different; our thought systems are different; and our personalities are different; our needs, expectations, and demands are different. Our minds are one. Our minds are the same, either in terms of fear or in terms of love. There is nothing else.

The gifts I offer you are really offered to me in the context of a relationship with you, because I still believe you are out there. Therefore, I must believe I am having love extend through me to you. That is the illusion- that there is someone out there. The first illusion is that you are out there, and that you are the enemy out to steal from me and destroy me. Consequently, I need an illusion that undoes that, and that is the illusion that you are my friend, not my enemy. That is a helpful illusion. The ultimate step is to realize you are not my friend; you are me. You and I are not separate. Again, first comes the perception of you as an enemy, someone outside me who is going to steal from me, from whom I need protection and defense. The correction for that is to realize that you are not my enemy; you are my friend, my brother. The final step is realizing that you and I are one. That sequence is found in The Song of Prayer pamphlet, when Jesus talks about praying for your enemies, realizing that you are praying for this person who is your brother, and ultimately recognizing this person is yourself (S-1.II.-V). That is the culmination.

Reaching that point is what A Course in Miracles means by the real world. There is no perception of someone else as separate from you, although there is still the experience within the dream of someone separate from you. When Jesus was talking to people, obviously there was a part of him that felt he was talking to someone else, but there was another part of his mind that knew he was talking to himself. In fact, he was not even doing the talking. It was simply love expressing through his mind to another seemingly separate mind. But that was all one. There was not a sense of Jesus as a self separate or different from others. It was a recognition that within the dream of separateness, we are all one. There was only the presence of one that was being shared equally. Within the dream, it appeared to be shared through the words he taught and the example he showed us, etc. In his mind he knew it was all a dream, and that it was simply the reflection of an abstract love that joined all of us as one. That selflessness is the end of the dream. That is the real world. But before you reach that point, you first must have the illusion of the other person as your friend, because that is the correction of the belief that this person was your enemy.

That is why the Course is so clear in stating that it stops short of Heaven. Its goal is to lead us to the gate of Heaven and help us unlearn what the ego has taught us. It states that it does not aim to teach what is beyond the gate (T-26.III.5). The goal of the Course is to have us just get to the point when we realize that you are not separate from me, that you are not my enemy; you are not even my brother-you are my Self. But until we get to that point we need all the intervening steps that teach us that you are not my enemy, you are my friend. What I am seeing in you is a projection of what is within me. What you want to avoid is the trap of getting caught in the world of form, a world of bodies. It is not my body forgiving your body. It is basically my mind forgiving itself for its perceived sin.

**Part XXIII
"It can be but my gratitude I earn" (W-pI.197) (cont.)**

**(W-pI.197.4:1-2) It does not matter if another thinks your gifts unworthy. In his mind there is a part that joins with yours in thanking you.**

This is really the point of our discussion. It does not matter what your response is. If my response is loving and minds are joined, there is a part of your mind that has received it. That is the same idea I mentioned earlier in terms of healing. If my mind does not perceive you or experience you as being sick, as being a body, as being separate from me, and minds are joined, then your mind is healed along with mine. The healing has already occurred. You may not choose to accept it, but that does not mean that the gift has not been accepted on another level. It does not matter what you do with my gift.

**(W-pI.197.4:3-4) It does not matter if your gifts seem lost and ineffectual. They are received where they are given.**

They are given on the level of the mind, and they are received on the level of the mind. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the body.

**(W-pI.197.4:5) In your gratitude . . .**

The gratitude again is the gratitude that you are not separate from me. Remember the theme from Lesson 195 that we saw earlier: "We thank our Father for one thing alone; that we are separate from no living thing, and therefore one with Him" (W-pI.195.6:1). So my gratitude is that you and I are one. We are not separate. First I have the illusion of our being separate, which is the basis of the ingratitude I felt. Then I have the illusion that we are not separate, and I feel grateful for that. It is still an illusion that we are friends. The ultimate truth, of course, is that we are not separate in any way.

**(W-pI.197.4:5-6) In your gratitude are they** [the gifts of love and peace] **accepted universally, and thankfully acknowledged by the Heart of God Himself. And would you take them back, when He has gratefully accepted them?**

Obviously this is not meant literally. It is a metaphor. I realize that you and I are one and there is no one out there who has been attacking me. It is really myself I have been attacking: "It can be but myself I crucify" (W-pI.196). Likewise, I have changed my thinking and no longer feel ungrateful for you because I believe you are attacking me. I feel gratitude, because it was through that misperception of your attacking me that I can recognize it was myself I was attacking—that you and I are one. I am not only joining with you in the love of the Holy Spirit or the love of Jesus; I am also joining with the Love of God. That is what "the Heart of God" expresses. When this passage says that the gifts are acknowledged gratefully by the Heart of God Himself, it simply means that by my joining with you in love, I must be joining with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and I must be joining with God. It is all one love; it is all one heart; it is all one mind; and there is nothing that is separate. Then Jesus asks us whether, given that, we would really want to take our gift back, when that goes directly against God's Love? Of course the answer is "Yes, I do want to take it back, precisely because it does go against God's Love, and I am afraid of God's Love."

Thus, when I feel the beginning signs of ingratitude again, and feel justified in not being grateful to you because of what you have done, what I am really doing is not turning my back on you, because ultimately there is no you out there. I am turning my back on the Love of God, and I am saying I do not want to be in the Heart of God; I want to be in the heart of my ego, which of course is the original ego mistake. The perfect way, then, of keeping me outside the Heart of God, a Mind that is totally unified in Love, is to keep myself angry, to keep myself separate, to keep myself ungrateful, and to feel perfectly justified in doing so. That is why I would choose to withdraw those gifts and say, "Why should I give you those gifts? Why should I throw pearls before swine? My love is too wonderful and too pure to be wasted on the likes of you." Obviously, what I am really saying is that God's Love is too wonderful and too pure to be wasted on the likes of me. I blot all of that out, however, and say it is your fault.

**(W-pI.197.5:1) God blesses every gift you give to Him, and every gift is given Him, because it can be given only to yourself.**

Again, this idea is absolutely crucial in understanding the whole thought system of A Course in Miracles. The gift I give you is the gift I give myself is the gift I give God, because it is all one. The gift I believe God gives to me is the gift I believe He gives to you, because it is all one. It cannot be that I can give something to you and not receive it myself. That is why the Course says giving and receiving are the same. What is really important is that if I believe you are giving me a gift of hatred and fear, I must be believing that is a gift I have given you; I must believe it is a gift God is giving me, because it must be the gift I believe I have given God. It cannot be that I give to you without having it given to me.

Remember, everything is the same; nothing is different, because it is all one mind. It is all an act, a drama that is being acted out in my mind. It has nothing to do with separate bodies. The ego always tries to fragment, separate out, say something is true there but not here. It is all one. So the way I perceive you is the way I perceive me is the way I perceive God.

**(W-pI.197.5) God blesses every gift you give to Him, and every gift is given Him, because it can be given only to yourself. And what belongs to God must be His Own** [we are part of God; we are God's Own.]. **Yet you will never realize His gifts are sure, eternal, changeless, limitless, forever giving out, extending love and adding to your never-ending joy while you forgive but to attack again.**

Jesus is describing what The Song of Prayer pamphlet calls "forgiveness-to-destroy" (S-2.II), which is also described both in the workbook and the text, but not by that name (see for example, T-30.VI.1-4; W-pI.126.1-7; W-pI.134.1-5). The idea is that if my forgiveness and gratitude are based upon what you do in return, and whether you accept my offering or not, then I will never know that God's gifts are sure, eternal, changeless, etc., because my gifts are not sure, eternal, changeless, or limitless. My gifts are always contingent. They are always based upon whether you appreciate them or not, whether you accept them or not. That is the way we usually give gifts-certainly the way we give psychological or emotional gifts to each other.

Whatever I am doing is reinforcing within itself when it comes from love, whether it is a job, project, or a relationship. In other words, I do not need anyone's gratitude or anyone telling me that it is wonderful-I know within myself that it comes from love, and so it is an expression of love. What the world or other people do with it is their choice, but that has nothing whatsoever to do with the choice that I have made. That is not how the world gives gifts; that is not how people usually work in the world; that is not how people live in relationships. The world's view is very much that what we do and say and how we feel about it is contingent upon what other people do in return. That would be false gratitude, false forgiveness, or false giving.

**(W-pI.197.6:1) Withdraw the gifts you give . . .**

My motivation for withdrawing the gifts I have given is that you have not accepted them the way I think they should be accepted-these were wonderfully holy and loving gifts and you should have given me that kind of appreciation!

**(W-pI.197.6:1) . . . and you will think that what is given you has been withdrawn.**

This, of course, is crucial. If I withdraw my gifts to you, it is only because I believe that God has withdrawn His gifts to me. And if I believe that is what God has done, I am denying that I am the one withdrawing my gifts. In other words, I tell God I am not going to love Him anymore because of what He has done to me. That is the original withdrawal of which I am accusing myself. That is the Course's version of original sin. Then I turn it around and it becomes that God has withdrawn His gifts-I believe God has moved away from me. In reality, I am the one who has moved away from God, but I forget that. All that I am aware of is that there is a difference now-there is a separation between me and God. I have forgotten that I am the one who moved away. I see there is a difference, a separation, and conclude that it must be that God has moved away from me. That is why I am not feeling so wonderful and peaceful and happy. It is God's fault! So I accuse God of loving me one day and kicking me out of His home the next day.

If that is what I believe, that is what I will relive over and over again. I will do that with everyone else. This is reflected in the common experience of abused and battered children becoming abusing and battering adults and parents themselves. They end up doing to their children exactly what was done to them. It is very common. That is exactly what we all have done. We believe we had abused God. We then deny that and believe God has abused and battered us. So we go out in the world and do the very same thing, feeling unfairly treated, feeling that we are the innocent victims of the world. We put on the face of innocence, because we have forgotten we are the ones who did it.

**Part XXIV
"It can be but my gratitude I earn" (W-pI.197) (conclusion)**

**(W-pI.197.6:2-3) But learn to let forgiveness take away the sins you think you see outside yourself, and you can never think the gifts of God are lent but for a little while, before He snatches them away again in death. For death will have no meaning for you then.**

When I allow my mind to be corrected for me by the Holy Spirit I realize that the sins are not outside me but inside. In other words, it is not you I crucify; it is myself I crucify (W-pI.196). But because I am the one who has done that, I can change my mind about it. That is what gets me from the left-hand chair to the middle chair. At that point I will no longer think that God is the One Who has done this to me. Once I realize that you have not done this to me, but I have done this to me, I will realize that God has not withdrawn His Love from me. I have withdrawn my love from me. He has not done that. I am the one who has moved away, not Him.

Death will no longer have meaning for me, because the meaning death has in this world is that it is God's punishment. God lends His gifts for a little while, which is the time I am alive in this body, and then He snatches them away again in death. There is a part of us that believes God is the author of life, and God is giving me this life. Then God, in "His greater wisdom," a euphemism for God in "His vengeful wrath," takes this life away from me-God has called me back to Him, something usually said in funeral services. That is a hell of a God! He gives you a gift of life for 30, 40, 50, 80 years, and then poof!-it is gone again. The ego's interpretation is that He takes life away because you stole it from Him, so now He is punishing you by taking it back.

When you realize all this is made up-that we are the ones who made up death, not God-then death will not have any meaning for us anymore, because the only meaning death has for us is that it is punishment.

**(W-pI.197.7:1-2) And with the end of this belief** [that God is going to punish us and kill us] **is fear forever over. Thank your Self** [the Christ in us.] **for this, for He is grateful only unto God, and He gives thanks for you unto Himself.**

The original perception of the ego was that my self is not grateful to God because God is dominating it-He is a dictator, a big boss. He is not a loving Creator or a loving Father. Therefore this self, the ego, is not grateful to God. My Self, however, is grateful to God, but it is not gratitude as we know it in the world, because the Christ Self is not separate from God and could not even know there is a God to Whom It should be grateful. This passage is meant more metaphorically.

**(W-pI.197.7:3) To everyone who lives will Christ yet come, for everyone must live and move in Him.**

That line is from St. Paul (Acts 17:28). The text says, "The outcome is as certain as God" (T-2.III.3:10). We will all awaken from the dream and return home.

**(W-pI.197.7:4-5) His Being in His Father is secure, because Their Will is One. Their gratitude to all They have created**[God and Christ] **has no end, for gratitude remains a part of love.**

The song of gratitude we sing in this world is still a song of illusion because it is being grateful to someone perceived as outside us. The song of gratitude between God and Christ is not an illusion because it is a soundless song sung within the One Mind.

**(W-pI.197.8:1-2) Thanks be to you, the holy Son of God. For as you were created, you contain all things within your Self.**

There are no things outside God; all things are within us, which means all loving thoughts are within us. This does not literally mean there is a thing within the Self, which is a state of perfect Oneness.

**(W-pI.197.8:3-4) And you are still as God created you. Nor can you dim the light of your perfection.**

That is the end of the ego's thought system, which tells us we have not only dimmed the light of our perfection as Christ, but we have put it out. It will never more be lit again.

**(W-pI.197.8:5-7) In your heart the Heart of God is laid. He holds you dear, because you are Himself. All gratitude belongs to you, because of what you are.**

(W-pI.197.9:1-2) Give thanks as you receive it. Be you free of all ingratitude to anyone who makes your Self complete.

The idea is that every seemingly fragmented thing outside me is part of myself because we are all thoughts. First, we reunite all the thoughts of the self because the mind of the ego is all one. At that point, we realize all of this is simply a defense against the one thought we all share as God's Self, as Christ, which is a thought of love. That is what this means. The only way I can awaken from this terrible dream of separation and fragmentation is to realize that none of us has separate interests. That is what the gratitude is for. It is a correction for the experience of ingratitude that says you have a gift and I want it. You took it from me, and I want to get it back. It is realizing that we all share the same gift.

**(W-pI.197.9:2-8) Be you free of all ingratitude to anyone who makes your Self complete. And from this Self is no one left outside. Give thanks for all the countless channels which extend this Self. All that you do is given unto Him. All that you think can only be His Thoughts, sharing with Him the holy Thoughts of God. Earn now the gratitude you have denied yourself when you forgot the function God has given you. But never think that He has ever ceased to offer thanks to you.**

The gratitude has been lifted to a much higher place. Gratitude at the end is really taken as a symbol of the Love of God and the Thought of Love that all of us share. But it is a Thought of Love that we believe we have denied, thrown away, and will never get back. The ultimate meaning of all gratitude we feel is the fact that we were wrong and God was right. What we thought has been forever lost has simply been held in safekeeping for us. It is the gratitude we feel toward each other, toward Jesus, and toward God that allows us to have that memory be returned to us.

Let me close by reading the very end of the teacher's manual. This is a wonderful expression of gratitude from Jesus to us. It is basically his blessing to us as we go out into the world to be his teachers.

And now in all your doings be you blessed.
God turns to you for help to save the world.
Teacher of God, His thanks He offers you,
And all the world stands silent in the grace
You bring from Him. You are the Son He loves,
And it is given you to be the means
Through which His Voice is heard around the world,
To close all things of time; to end the sight
Of all things visible; and to undo
All things that change. Through you is ushered in
A world unseen, unheard, yet truly there.
Holy are you, and in your light the world
Reflects your holiness, for you are not
Alone and friendless. I give thanks for you,
And join your efforts on behalf of God,
Knowing they are on my behalf as well,
And for all those who walk to God with me.
AMEN
(M-29.8)