

02 Pathwork Lecture #244 –1996 Edition
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“BE IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD” -- THE EVIL OF INERTIA

03 Greetings, my very beloved friends.

04 What is the deepest meaning of the spirit of self-preservation? If the deep mind knows that there is eternal life, why does it hold on to life and instinctively fight leaving the body? This seems to be a contradiction.

05 I shall talk about this very important facet of your inner life and attempt to give you a deeper understanding of it, so that you can use it in your search for unification. The longing for physical life expresses the divine spirit surging forward into the void, creating matter and form and eventually animating these forms and irradiating them with life, consciousness, and divinity.

06 These words exactly describe the divine plan: to push the spirit forward, outward, gradually filling the void. As I have mentioned before in other lectures, it is during this process and venture that evil comes into existence. The slow penetration of the spirit into the void permits divine attributes to manifest only to a small degree at first. Therefore consciousness is fragmented, concepts are split, and vision is limited; hence come error, ignorance, and fear, creating, in turn, further evil attitudes. Light meeting darkness initially distorts vision; then being is fraught with the threat of nonbeing.

07 On the level of your consciousness you exist in a world torn between the forces of good and the forces of evil. The more the spirit penetrates the void the more truth and love transform untruth and fear and hate. The more life fills the void, the more immortality becomes an experienced fact.

08 On the human level of appearances this process creates conflict. Human beings long for eternal life. They know eternal life does not exist in the physical body, yet they frantically strive to maintain it there. Religious people who deny the importance of physical life because they sense and inwardly experience the eternal life of the soul, misunderstand and ignore the importance of God's plan: allowing the spirit to infiltrate the void -- and ultimately, matter -- thus spiritualizing all that is.

09 Yet those who tremble at the thought of physical death because they do not feel the reality of eternal life are equally misled. Recently I spoke of the importance of working through the fear of death and the longing for eternal life. As a next step, it is

important to grasp fully how the striving for physical life is not merely an expression of such a fear. It is, on a deeper level, a valid expression of the great movement of creation, the fulfillment of the Plan of Salvation.

- 10** When this is understood and emotionally experienced, even only occasionally, then Christ's important injunction, "Be in the world, but not of the world" becomes very clear. It leads to a joyous will to live in the body, without a trace of fear of physical death. The personality fully realizes that on the more internal levels of infinity and eternity a greater, fuller life exists, which is free from the threats of death, nonbeing, pain, injustice, insecurity, loneliness. The externalized life in the body, in spite of impending physical death, becomes a joyous venture for a greater cause. Physical death itself is increasingly seen as a transformation into a primal state of fuller existence more conducive to well-being.
- 11** So a new unity comes into being. The personality knows of the eternal, fuller, deeper life and thus feels very secure in the physical life. Yet physical life is also experienced as a deeply meaningful undertaking that must never be shirked. Even its difficulties become bearable and meaningful in the understanding of eternal life on the one hand, and the task of physical living, on the other. In this way, "Be in the world, but not of the world" will have a new meaning for you. You will know that the world of material manifestation is a temporary one in which you can play an important part and which you need to affirm with all your consciousness and energies, but which you should not ever assume to be your only and ultimate existence.
- 12** Allow the meaning of these words to fully take hold of you. Even if you are still far from experiencing the reality of eternal life, even if you have not yet totally experienced the fear of death and the longing for eternal life, even if you still stand on the threshold of this new phase, it will be very helpful to grasp the deeper meaning of "Be in the world but not of the world."
- 13** The deeper understanding can come only if and when you live with a deep commitment to God to fulfill the task you have come to fulfill. You already know that this task must be twofold: personal purification and transformation and giving over one's talents, energies, and assets to the greater cause, the Plan of Salvation, according to the will of God. When this commitment is made, eventually everything must fall into place. This may take time, because blind spots and a deep unawareness may still persist despite the commitment. But time is only an illusory hindrance anyway.
- 14** The fuller your commitment is, and the more sincerely you mean it and put it into daily practice, the greater your excitement and your joy of living will become. Peace and security will grow accordingly in your soul. Conversely, the more your life is dedicated to the pursuit of selfish ends, the greater your insecurity will be, accompanied by a frightening sense of the meaninglessness of all life. Obviously, this leads to the inevitable vicious circle: If life is meaningless, all you can do is to push selfishly toward at least minor fulfillments, which are divorced from Christ. And the greater this separation is, the more meaningless all life will appear. Thus the vicious circle

continues.

- 15** Still, many of you have made your commitment to God and your task only half-heartedly. You live with one foot in heaven and one foot in hell, so to speak. Heaven is that part of you in which you sincerely dedicate yourself to the task for God, in which you become part of the great legion, the forces of good. It is heaven because you feel deeply content; your life makes sense; everything is tinged with loveliness, meaning, fascination, joy, and security. But where you hold back and try to strike a bargain, substituting a little self-seeking for doing the will of God, which you deny, you live in hell because your life appears meaningless, boring, frightening, at loose ends, separate from all things in creation. To live in heaven means knowing that you are an integral part of creation.
- 16** The misconception that dedication of your life to God's greater plan brings suffering and pain is still prevalent. If this were not so, the surrender of your will to God would be more complete, less fraught with resistance, and more trusting.
- 17** The surrender of your will to God's will and the dedication of your life, your talents, and attributes to the great plan not only make you flourish in your daily life but are the key to the unification of your split, where you are still torn between belief and unbelief, trust and fear, hate and love, ignorance and wisdom, separateness and union, death and eternal life.
- 18** One of the most important attributes in this struggle is courage. The role of courage is often underestimated. In fact, most people assume that spiritual people are weak and meek, implying that they are without courage, for courage requires strength and energy. The spineless are often assumed to be victims of the aggressive, bold ones. Thus, on some irrational level of your emotional perception, courage is often associated with evil, while the weak, cowardly person is associated with mildness, gentleness, goodness. Nothing could be further from the truth. I shall attempt to show you now how cowardice is just as evil as active perpetration of evil. Spiritual cowardice not only leads to betrayal of the best, of God, but to as active and potent evil as the more obvious aggressive acting out of cruel, self-serving, dishonest malice. It is important to be fully aware of this, to liberate yourself from the illusion that your weakness, your cowardliness, are really not so harmful, and perhaps are even more spiritual than the fighting spirit of those who risk themselves and their personal advantages by aggressive goodness and positive assertion.
- 19** What happens when you are weak, when you do not stand up to evil behavior, when you collude with it and refrain from fighting for the truth? You encourage evil, you sustain the illusion in the person who perpetrates it that it is not so bad, that it is all right, that it is smart and that many people support it. This perpetuates the further illusion that by asserting truth, standing up for decency, and exposing evil, you will be isolated, ridiculed, and rejected. In other words, you foster the delusion that in order to be accepted one needs to sell out integrity and decency.

- 20** All this happens constantly in human interaction. Such encouragement of evil is easy to push out of full awareness. Yet around the person who indulges in this kind of negative behavior there is a cloud of guilt, confusion, and an emotional climate of self-rejection. No matter how you try to talk yourself out of self-hate and into self-esteem on theoretical grounds, you will not succeed until you have gained the spiritual courage to be willing to sacrifice acceptance from others -- if indeed you believe that this price has to be paid.
- 21** When someone in your presence maligns another, for example, your silence is not goodness, gentleness, peacefulness. Far from it. In a sense it is more destructive and insidiously negative than outright, active maligning. Maligners expose their evil and thus take the chance of being rebuked and having to face the consequences. Passive listeners cheat by trying to have it both ways: they derive as much negative gratification from the maligning as the active one, without, however, risking any negative consequences, and even priding themselves that they really did not participate in the act.
- 22** Can you see that silent collusion with evil is more abrasive than active evil? Active evil alone could never have led to the crucifixion of Jesus. It required the cooperation of the traitors, the colluders, the silent bystanders who were afraid for their skin and thus allowed evil to -- apparently -- win. But, of course, evil can never really win.
- 23** The same is true of the mass murders in totalitarian regimes, such as in Germany before and during the last war. The few perpetrators could not have gotten very far if they had not been aided by the silent collusion of the many for whom their own skin was more important than truth, decency, honesty, charity, love, empathy -- in short, all that God stands for.
- 24** This leads to an interesting speculation, my dearest friends; namely, that the active principle in distortion, harmful and murderous as it may be, could never by itself wreak the same havoc as the passive, receptive principle in distortion. This is why many spiritual teachings say that the lowest quality on the whole scale is not hatred, but inertia. Inertia, on the energy level, is the freezing of the flow of divine energy. In inertia the radiant matter of divine influx thickens, hardens, blocks, and deadens. On the level of consciousness, inertia means exactly what I have been talking about. It includes primary and secondary guilt. The primary guilt is for cooperation with evil, permitting it, conveying one's approval of it, no matter how subtly and indirectly. The secondary guilt lies in pretending and claiming that one is not participating in the evil, and even pretending to be good, when one's cowardice and self-serving gives silent permission to the evil act. This is why Jesus Christ, in his life on earth, always stressed that the evildoer is nearer to God than the self-righteous, apparently good person.
- 25** Inertia refrains from action for the good. Laziness, nonmovement, passivity -- in a negative sense -- always support indifference, selfishness, nonparticipation, promoting stagnation and hindering growth and change in the self and the environment.

- 26** This is why you, my friends, in this community find yourselves in a very active phase. You sometimes feel that this should be tempered with more silence and receptivity, to establish more balance. But do not forget that an inherent wisdom and purpose governs the way in which the pendulum swings. In order to take you out of your inertia, which is an ever-present temptation, you need to use all the drive and active movement in you, even if this means temporarily more activity than receptivity. In the active movement of your soul, you build and create, you change and grow, and your soul becomes accustomed to movement as enjoyable, life-giving, and relaxing.
- 27** Inertia is believed to be restful, while activity is believed to be exhausting. This illusion is a distortion in the deeper mind. As long as this image prevails in you, you need to question your desire for more receptivity and quiescence. Is it not an excuse for staying inert, avoiding effort and risk? Only when you are very sure of this will the pendulum swing into a new balance. The overemphasis on activity now is the balance that you need in order to establish harmony in your soul.
- 28** Stagnation and inertia are indeed the greatest evil. They are of matter, resisting the enlivening power of the spirit, of the Eternal, which desires to penetrate the void that is totally stagnant and inert. False receptivity is masked inertia. The more false receptivity exists, the less real receptivity is possible. The inability to receive love, pleasure, fulfillment, and the compulsion to sabotage fulfillment come from not giving to God. When you give to God, you need to be active, to overcome inertia, to move and do and act, to risk and sometimes to fight against your own and others' evil. Only then will you feel free from guilt and become truly receptive to what the universe wants to give to you. The grace of God is everywhere around and within you. It is always there; you are bathed in it. Your inability to receive it makes it appear unattainable.
- 29** Giving to God means to give over to the great plan, to His will, and to dedicate your life to this. Giving to God means activity, and at times even pushing through the inertia that wants to keep you from being active. The activity may be directed to many areas, apart from fighting the obvious resistance to your growth process. Such movement is necessary in the smallest details of daily living when you are involved in the noble process of creating a new society. You may have to deal actively with apparently menial, mundane issues. You may have to confront actively the resistance to changes that are so necessary in the process of being and living according to the principles of divine law. So, my friends, ascertain the exact nature of your inertia, and, even more important, how you rationalize it in order to indulge in it.
- 30** When you still feel weak, confused, self-rejecting, or unfulfilled in any area, when you are divided within yourself and fluctuate between submission and rebellion, you know quite well that you are divided. You are not yet autonomous. The only way true autonomy can be established is by your total surrender to the will of God. This must include the willingness to be temporarily hurt, rejected, or put at a disadvantage. It must include the courage to risk something or to sacrifice a selfish aim. It also includes the faith that this is truly in your own best interest, even from a very human point of view.

- 31** Before closing this message, I would like to talk about and help you with a particular phase on your path. Often you find it so difficult to change a destructive, negative attitude or fault even though you have become very aware of it. For this particular juncture, I have special advice. I suggest you take two approaches, both of which are necessary.
- 32** The first is that you focus with all your intention and acumen on the extremely painful consequences of this negative trait to yourself and others. You may be aware of the negative trait, but too often you resist recognizing its effects. When you do fully recognize them, you will experience the pain you inflict on yourself and on others, and thus be more strongly motivated to want to change.
- 33** This leads me to the second point. Only by praying for divine assistance and intervention, by turning to Jesus Christ and asking for his personal presence and help, can you influence the involuntary currents and attitudes, and change them according to the harmonious laws of God.
- 34** Your primary attitude in life must become dedication to God's will and plan, your giving over in all things and putting God first. All other things then become the natural effects of this attitude and will be fulfilled accordingly. If you find yourself unfulfilled in your vocation, if you do not enjoy your work, or find it meaningless, if you do not earn enough to experience pleasure and comfort and material security, somewhere within you you are holding out on your surrender to the Creator of all that is. If you lack a relationship and are lonely, or if you are sexually troubled, blocked, and unfulfilled, somewhere within you, you are holding out on giving over to God's will for you and to the task you are meant to fulfill. Perhaps you put emphasis on your profession, your mate, your personal fulfillment, rather than letting these other fulfillments flow as a natural byproduct of your dedication to your task for God, the task you are meant to carry out as part of the great army fighting for the forces of good. Meditate on these vast issues that fill your universe and are of utmost importance in the scheme of all things: the great battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil engaged in the gradual penetration of life into the void. When you perceive this vast, universal issue as the key to all other issues, you will begin to put first things first and see your private world in its proper perspective. This will bring a wonderful new balance and harmony into your life and lead you directly to the faith, the knowledge of the ever-living God and of your individual immortality that alone can still the deep existential longing I discussed in an earlier lecture.
- 35** With this I bless you, my most beloved friends. Let this blessing open your whole being, your heart, and your mind. Experience the Creator in whom you live all the time. Experience the utter safety and joy, the limitless fountain of creative possibilities that this entails. Give to your life a one-pointed direction to fulfill yourself. This can be done only with and through God.

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