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- *Finding balance through grace and Presence*

God speaks, but God also acts and hears. God's response to your prayers is always immediate. In fact, that response is not just a response. It is a reality of Presence. This reality of Presence is what you are seeking. When there is chaos around you, you seek the reality of God's presence, not just the knowledge that somehow it is there, but a recognition that it really is a reality. It is present, and you are being fulfilled.

You are correct in your observations that it is most difficult to feel the balance of which we have spoken when you are surrounded by all that creates pain or anxiety, fear, despair, and seeming unlimited terror, but the reality of Presence accompanies you. You speak in some religious circles of grace. It is the grace that is present that creates the balance we refer to. You are given comfort, even as you experience pain, for the offering of comfort is not the elimination of pain. The offering of comfort is a strengthening in your capacity to deal with what must be done.

Many religions speak of grace as something that is earned and is either experienced in human form as a reward or in spirit form as a reward. As you understand already, grace is never earned. It is simply given. The reality of God's presence is not worked toward. It is not a goal. It is not an achievement. It isn't something which is granted because it is requested. It simply is.

The reality of Presence is a grace. God's presence in your life is not greater because you study scriptural text or attend some kind of spiritual gathering. That Presence is yours despite what you do, despite what happens to you on your journey. That grace is always there. When you feel overcome by what happens in your lives, that Presence is not withdrawn. It is there, and you may ask then how you can find a way to draw upon that Presence when you are consumed by trouble. That Presence, that grace, is there. It is strengthening your spirit, your soul, the *who* that we spoke of.

The grace that is the Creator's presence can be thought of as a blessing that is shared, as are all blessings, by every human being. There is no individual who is blessed more than another, and yet how frequently one responds to good news or reassurance by saying, "I've been blessed!" Does that imply that until that moment you are not so blessed? Of course not, but when you say, "I've been blessed," the truth is that you are actually declaring, "I see my blessings. My spirit feels my blessings."

When you face great difficulties, it is easy to feel you are not blessed, and you pray that God's blessings will fall upon you. God does not offer blessings in that way. God does not offer blessings to those who feel they have suddenly seen the truth, and knowing the truth they are blessed with a heavenly future. That is not how the Creator works with all that is created.

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Of course you are blessed, but what does that mean? It means that the comfort of spirit, the comfort of soul, the comfort of emotion, the comfort that all crave to enjoy is constantly there. The comfort is yours for the taking, not for the asking. You cannot really ask for God's blessings. You can only ask in the name of Spirit that you become more aware of those blessings that are a part of every life.

We have spoken of the *who* and the *what* that each of you is engaged in learning to understand. God's blessings are the same for the *who*. No one is blessed more than another, yet there are many who see and recognize the blessings, and there are many who don't see or refuse to recognize. When you find yourself in turmoil, you experience what you experience. It may be grief or loss. It may be concern for others. It may be concerns you have about your own well-being. There are many directions this turmoil can take, and it is normal and okay to grieve. It is okay to be fearful. It is okay to worry. It is okay to be angry. It is okay to be jealous or envious, for these all belong to how human beings interact with life. But regardless of those responses to what life presents you, the more your awareness of that spiritual Presence continues to grow, the stronger will be that flicker of the candle in the darkness you experience.

You may go through those moments of concern, of turmoil—turmoil of the spirit, turmoil of relationships, political, economic, emotional turmoil—and in so doing you may lose sight of the grace. That, too, is okay. We don't encourage you to turn your back on the Light, but we do say that turning your back on that Light is a human response experienced by all, and at those moments when your back is turned, you don't see the Light, you don't feel the Light, you may not even feel you can ask for the Light, but the Light is still there. The Presence is still there. The love of the Creator is still there. You are not alone. Even in those dark moments, if you can remind yourself that hard as it is to feel this way, you do know somehow, in some mysterious way, God is with you. That is grace.

When you feel defeated, you are still the recipient of grace. You may ask, "How can I feel that when all around me seems to collapse?" The answer is that you may not feel that every moment of the turmoil, but in reflection from time to time, allow yourself to remember that the grace of Presence, God's presence, the Creator's presence, is a reality, and though you don't feel it, though you don't see it, it continues to accompany you.

If we suggest to you that when you are under great stress to step back and just remember God is a part of this and a part of you, that may seem at that very moment an unrealistic suggestion, for when you are entwined in challenges, you can't simply eliminate those bonds and put your hands in the air in rejoicing to God. You're in no mood to rejoice. You're filled with other concerns. We can, nevertheless, encourage you when you are aware of such opportunities to step back from what concerns you, and allow yourself to be fully in the Light, to fully bathe in that Presence. That approach, that condition, that state of awareness may last but a second, but that second can offer a

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strength that encourages and nourishes the balance, the willingness to accept that God fully is, and because God is, you exist. Because God is, your spirit can be strengthened, and what is a part of you for all time will continue its journey of love and vision.

That's where we are on our path. It is indeed a path of love and vision. We are filled with love, and that love provides a vision that illuminates our own travel as spiritual beings. We continue on our path. We continue to grow. We continue to be warmed by the love that is God as Creator. It is not some kind of miracle that you are loved by the Spirit Center of all. It is simply the natural outcome of the spirit and the energy that the spirit inhabits.

You are comforted because that's what Love does. You are loved because that's what Love does. You are given inner strength and affirmed in being because that's what Love does. It is not an obligation of God. It is not an obligation of your guides. It is the natural expression of What Is.

You are being sustained, sustained in joy and sustained in grief. The nourishment that is God's nourishment is always present, and there will be times when you are hungry for that nourishment, and there will be times when you are less so, but what sustains and nourishes is still present. Find the times when you can feel that nourishment. Find the times when you can intentionally fill yourself with an awareness of that Presence, and then trust that in the storms that you experience, you will know that calm will always return.

Balance is a balance of awareness. It is a balance that comes from being reminded of the presence of God, and when you find yourself in a gap when no vision seems possible, allow yourself, just for a moment to imagine that in some mysterious way you are being blessed as all are blessed. You're not being set aside. You're not being punished. You're not being abandoned in one way or another. You are uplifted and you are sustained. You are nourished and you are embraced.

We embrace each of you with that reality of Presence.

Amen.