

## **The Wisdom of the Overself: ch 9. The Shadows Of Evil And Suffering – The Miracle of Grace**

What is grace? It is a descent of the Overself into the underself's zone of awareness. It is a visitation of power as unexpected and unpredictable as it is welcome and gratifying. It is an unseen hand stretched forth from the world-darkness amid which we grope with unsteady feet. It is the voice of the Overself speaking suddenly out of the cosmic silence with which we are environed. It is like a glorious rainbow of hope which suddenly appears when all seems lost.

More precisely, grace is a mystical energy, an active principle pertaining to the Overself which can produce results in the fields of human thought, feeling and flesh alike on the one hand, or in human karma, circumstances and relations on the other hand. It is the cosmic will, not merely a pious wish or kindly thought, and can perform authentic miracles under its own unknown laws. Such is its dynamic potency that it can confer insight into ultimate reality as easily as it can lift a dying person back to life again or instantaneously restore the use of limbs to a crippled one.

Because the Overself exists in every man, grace too exists potentially in every man. When its power awakens within him he is immediately conscious of a tremendous change in the particular direction it takes, whether that change be mental or physical, emotional or eventful. Such indeed is the force of grace, that in the emotional or intellectual spheres its touch often over-stimulates him and may temporarily affect his balance.

The Overself is not far away, no farther in fact than a man's own heart and as near as is the life that sustains his days and nights. If it is felt as far away that is his illusion. He must cure himself of it by metaphysical enquiry and mystical practice. The statement that God dwells in the heart of man is not only a poetic one but also a scientific one. Shakespeare's perceptive power recognized this and hence he could openly speak of "that Deitie within my bosome" in his most mystical work *The Tempest*. Therefore the birth of grace is *first* felt in the heart, not in the head, because the heart is its most intimate habitat in the human body.

Grace manifests itself in two ways: first, a sense of dissatisfaction and insufficiency with the exterior life alone, second, a yearning for inner reality. The birth begins by a gentle indrawing of attention to the breast. The force works by a centripetal movement which attracts his attention inwards away from his external life and physical environment. To the degree that he obediently yields to this centripetal influence and centres his attention more and more on the interior direction to which it points, to that degree shall he find his reward. He begins to feel that something lies hidden within himself of which he must come into conscious possession and that without it he will suffer the miseries of privation and frustration. What this 'something' is does not form itself clearly in his mind but he feels and intuits it to be the sacred element, the divine soul. The ultimate effect is first, to cauterize the *personal* 'I'-thought in the man's heart and second, the way being thus prepared to confer an insight into ultimate reality. The first effect is accomplished by stages, which may spread out over several years, but the second one is always accomplished instantaneously.

***From The Notebooks of Paul Brunton***

Grace is the indrawing power, or inward pull, of Overself, which, being itself ever-present, guarantees the ever-presence of Grace. 18.5.2

Grace is the benign effluence of the Overself, the kindly radiation from it, ever-present in us. The theological use of this term to mean particular help given by God to man to enable him to endure temptation and act rightly is a serious and arbitrary narrowing down of its original meaning. It may mean this sometimes, but it also means the loving mercy God shows to man, which appears variously as enlightenment of the mind or relief of the heart, as change of outward physical conditions or a dynamic revolution-working energy acting on the aspirant or on his life. 18.5.4

Grace may be defined as the Overself's response to the personal self's aspiration, sincerity, and faith, lifting up the man to a level beyond his ordinary one. This working in us (as contrasted with the working *by us*) begins in deep passive stillness and ends in mental, emotional, and even physical activity. It is true that grace is given, but we ourselves help to make its blessing possible by the opening of self to receive it, the silencing of self to feel it, and the purifying of self to be fit for it. An unknown mysterious thing inside the self is drawing him to it. He is groping his way, but it constantly eludes him. There must be something very beautiful there, which the subconscious recognizes, for the feeling of being attracted will not leave him and only grows stronger if by remaining passive, meditative, he will let it. 18.5.38

Swami Ramdas gives the advice that the way to get Grace is to pray for it. The philosophical point of view is that one must *both* pray and pay for it. 18.5.177

It is said that grace is given only to a few chosen persons and that no matter how hard a man works on himself, unless he is fortunate enough to receive it, the illumination he wants will evade him. This teaching sounds depressing because it seems to put us at the mercy of caprice, favouritism, or arbitrariness. But the mystery of grace is not so mysterious as that. We are *all* children of God: there are no special favourites. Grace can come to all who seek it, but they must first make themselves ready to receive it. If they thirst, hunger, and seek with their whole heart and body, and if in addition they make the gestures of penance, self-denial, and purification both to prove their sincerity and to help achieve this readiness, it is inconceivable that the grace will not come to them in the end. 18.5.178

Grace is of two kinds. The ordinary, better known, and inferior kind is that which is found on the Long Path. It flows from the Overself in automatic response to intense faith or devotion, expressed during a time of need. It is a reaction to seeking for help. The rarer and superior kind is found on the Short Path. It arises from self-identification with the Overself or constant recollection of it. There is no ego here to seek help or to call for a Grace which is necessarily ever present in the Overself. 23.6.7