



LESSON 218 ~ Review VI
[198] Only my condemnation injures me.

Sarah's Commentary:

We have aligned with the ego thought system of sin, guilt, and fear and see ourselves as a separate self, alone in the world, weak and vulnerable. We have become unaware of what we are. With the choice made for the ego, we seemingly crossed a bridge from Oneness into the body and the world. The body and the world are illusions, but to us, they seem so very real because we have no recollection of how we got here. Our experience here will continue to feel very real until we have the experience of the holy instant in which we have a glimpse of the eternal. The bridge built by the ego has been detonated with denial and repression so we have no memory of the decision made by the mind to run away from our reality, as divine beings of light and love. Now, we think of our reality as a body, which is limited, lacking, vulnerable, and destructible.

Our decision to listen to the lies of the ego has resulted in tremendous guilt. The ego has convinced us that we have stolen our identity from God, and now we fear that He will come after us. It is not a conscious thought, but it is the origin of the guilt we hold in our wrong minds. However, the ego knows that we will not continue to choose it if it means being overwhelmed with guilt, so it has devised a plan for us to project the guilt and see it in others and blame them for our condition. Thus, we judge others for their guilt, and now we claim innocence for ourselves. When we condemn and blame others, we only experience more guilt, which hurts us. That is the part the ego has kept hidden from us, which is why Jesus goes to great lengths to unveil the ego myth that we have bought into. Once we see it clearly, we will readily dismiss it, as it is the source of all suffering. Jesus shows us that when we condemn our brothers, instead of getting rid of the guilt, we keep it.

There are many ways we condemn: through blame, judgment, attack, unsolicited advice-giving, analyzing the motives of others, correcting others, holding grievances and resentments, focusing on the mistakes of others or even our own, using others to meet our needs through our special relationships, holding onto past hurts, getting vengeance on others through our suffering, compensating for our negative beliefs by trying to be nice and kind, abusing ourselves with substance use and other self-indulgent behaviors and similar strategies that keep us bound to the ego.

These are examples of some of the ways the ego operates in the world. It is always self-serving, always giving to get, and always seeing differences. Even a feeling of discomfort or anxiety around someone is a self-attack based on self-judgment and self-hatred. Our discomforts are never about anyone else. When we take responsibility and see it all as a projection of our own unhealed thoughts, we can begin the process of choosing against the ego and releasing our wrong-minded thoughts to the Holy Spirit. This requires that we look at them first and recognize that they all come from our own wrong minds and are then projected out. The ego will always focus outward.

Our senses were made for this purpose. By looking outside of our own minds, we keep the ego thought system intact and not available for healing. By denying, projecting, and repressing our thoughts, they are kept apart from healing.

So what do we do? Our responsibility is to accept the Atonement for ourselves. What does this mean? It means we must take responsibility for our thoughts and recognize that what we have come to believe about ourselves is not the truth. We need to do the work of forgiveness so we can take the steps necessary to return to sanity until we can finally accept our true reality as created by God. How do we do that? We do it by forgiving our thoughts, taking responsibility for them and bringing them to awareness. We do it by being willing to see everything and everyone in our lives as an opportunity to heal ourselves. Everything happening in this illusion is helpful if we choose to see it that way.

With everything that comes up in my life, I have a decision to make. Do I use my past learning and apply my own judgments to my situation, or do I turn the whole situation over to the Holy Spirit for a miracle? Do I choose God or the ego? How do I know which choice I have made? If I still feel guilt, fear, and a lack of peace, then I have chosen the ego. I know that if I am chewing on some issue, then I am still in my ego mind. I know, if I have a story around the situation that I am unwilling to release, I am still in my ego. And I know I have chosen the right mind when I am at peace. It is a process that requires our commitment to stay vigilant, constantly watching our beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and opinions, which underpin the decisions we have made. We are called to be the observer and notice where the mind is focused. The ego may keep chattering, but our part is not to give it any attention.

What is my purpose here? It is always to remember who I am. To do so, I need to look honestly at everything in my life and bring it to the Holy Spirit. My usual way of figuring things out will not heal anything. We need to release our personal self from being the one in charge. Yes, we learn and study the Course, but only for one purpose---to heal the mind by applying what we learn. In order to do that, it is important that we look at everything and keep nothing hidden from the light of Truth. This means that we need to stop and look at what is going on in the mind. Defenses will not allow us to look, so we must be willing to let them down to the extent possible. This takes great courage, great honesty, and a strong dedication to the truth.

The important question to ask is, "What is this for?" in everything we do. It is all about purpose. The ego's purpose is to keep us invested in the illusion. The Holy Spirit's purpose is to wake us up to who we really are. Everything made by the ego can now be used by the Holy Spirit for healing. The form does not change. We can still have our special relationships, although now the content is no longer to serve our needs but for the purpose of healing. The body, which was made to get, can now be used for the holy purpose of giving and extending. Now the body is no longer an end in itself but is a communication device for the Holy Spirit.

Whatever situations you face today, use each of them as opportunities for healing, rather than for self-condemnation. This means that we do not judge what comes up. Murderous and hateful thoughts are only thoughts. Judging them is a way to condemn ourselves instead of looking at these thoughts honestly and being willing to release them to the Holy Spirit. He will do the rest. This is what makes forgiveness easy. It is not done by us. Our part is only to look at the blocks to love. As the mind awakens to the truth, we become clear channels so the love in us can extend through us. No amount of charity work, no amount of service, and no amount of good deeds or of being nice, which comes from compensating for the ego's darkness and self-serving motives, will

ever offer the extension of love in the world that can be demonstrated when we make space for the Holy Spirit.

It is our choice as to which operating system we run today---that of the ego or of the Holy Spirit. One brings only condemnation, while the other opens the way for us to behold our glory and be glad. What a choice! And of course, we can only accomplish this with mind training; and that means doing the practices so we over-learn the Lessons until they become our habitual response to every situation where we find that we are not experiencing peace.

Throughout the day when we are not feeling peace, we watch our thoughts and affirm, "***This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____***" (W.RVI.IN.6.2-3) to behold my brother's glory and my own so I can know my innocence and his. Only when we offer forgiveness can we behold the truth, or as Jesus says, "***behold this glory and be glad.***" (W.218.1.3) Ultimately, this is how we learn the central Lesson that we have been practicing every day, which is "***I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me.***" We do not learn this Lesson by shouting down the ego with affirmations. We learn it by looking at how we are defending ourselves against this truth.

Remind yourself of the truth frequently today, as you apply the Lesson to all the events and situations you encounter in your day. When you lapse, remember it is a mistake. Do not give power to your mistake by judging yourself for it and feeling guilty. Simply correct it and resolve to continue with your daily practice.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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