



LESSON 183

I call upon God's Name and on my own.

Sarah's Commentary:

I spent the year 2000 in Sedona where I studied the Course at the Circle of Atonement with Robert Perry. While I was there, Robert took some time off to go to a Catholic retreat center. When he returned, he spoke about his time at the retreat with this Lesson. It was very helpful to hear of his experience, as it allowed me to get a deeper appreciation of the message contained in this Lesson. Prior to this, I must admit, this Lesson did not really grab me. As I was repeating the name of God over and over as instructed, "**slowly again and still again,**" (W.183.6.1) it felt empty and ritualistic. It never elicited much in the way of a connection and seemed more like a mantra or magical incantation. Now I have come to see that by calling on God's Name, I am being called to detach from listening to the ego and to shift from the specifics of this world where we name everything and to realize that God's Love is all there is and the only thing I want. Everything in this world is named and thus it is separate and different from everything else. We give value to these things we name, but then we "**Repeat the Name of God, and little names have lost their meaning.**" (W.183.4.1)

When Robert returned from his retreat, he talked about the similarity of this Lesson with the centering prayer that is described in a written work called *The Cloud of Unknowing*. It is an ancient prayer practice that comes from a contemplative heritage of the Catholic Church. It is a method of prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of God's presence by quieting our minds.

The book speaks about the soul's attainment of the Absolute, but it is contingent on one central necessity: The perfect and passionate setting of the will upon the Divine, since "Thy love and thy meaning, the choice and point of thine heart," and "that intent stretching to God," which "if wholly set on Him, cannot fail to reach its goal." I love that! This book goes on to describe the motivation for God as "the sharp dart of longing love." It speaks of the happiness of those who have had the experience of this love.

There is a recognition by this author, as well, of the struggle with distracting thoughts and the confusion and bewilderment of the beginner in the early stages of contemplation. He also talks about the importance of recognizing the futility of study in a theoretical way without the benefit of release by grace. There is much that is beautiful in this writing. It speaks of the one necessity to connect with God, which is all about the will and the heart, rather than a focus on ascetic practices or intellectual striving. It is more about actively loving and choosing to apply the teachings in one's life. It is the synthesis of "love and will" seen as essential in order to achieve the goal of peace. "For silence is not God," he says in the *Epistle of Discretion*, "nor speaking is not God; fasting is not God, nor eating is not God; loneliness is not God, nor company is not God; nor yet any of all the other two such contraries. He is hid between them, and may not be found by any work of thy soul, but only by love of thine heart. He may not be known by reason, He may not be gotten by thought, nor concluded by understanding; but He may be loved and chosen with the true lovely will of thine heart."

We traditionally think of prayer as an active process of mentally or verbally communicating with God, whereas this form of centering prayer is one of receptivity or resting in God. It is an opening up of our minds, our hearts, and our whole being to God, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. It takes us from the intellectual understanding to the heart so that we fully embody the experience of resting in God.

We are calling upon the truth in our right minds. The Holy Spirit reflects that truth. Calling on the truth requires detachment from the thought system of the ego mind. (wrong mind). I choose to identify with God's Name so I can know I am God's Son and not the son of the ego. The way to this recognition is to look at our thoughts, be willing to see our way of seeing everything as wrong, and be willing to use the events and circumstances of this world as a classroom for undoing the thought system of the ego. It means that our lives are the path.

Calling upon God's name is a symbol of the Correction (Atonement) of how we currently see. It is to recognize that we are wrong about how we perceive everything, which is truly humbling. Jesus invites us to "**Remember nothing that you taught yourself, for you were badly taught.**" (T.28.I.7.1) (ACIM OE T.7.II.7)

This requires a willingness to become aware of my current perspectives so I can choose against what is false. I choose against the valueless, and I do this by not attending to my thoughts since they keep me invested in the world. This was so clearly illustrated in a movie I watched recently, called *Shutter Island*, in which I judged who was right and who was wrong, only to be shown at the end that all my perceptions were wrong. In the process of watching this movie, the Holy Spirit showed me how I was taken in by a convincing set-up, and I was absolutely wrong in my interpretations. The movie illustrated how we can be so absolutely certain of our perceptions in life that we are convinced this world is real. The apparatus for seeing and hearing are the ego's tools for bringing evidence to us that convince us of the reality of this world. The thought system of the ego is insane, but it is as consistent and logical as that of the Holy Spirit.

"The ingeniousness of the ego to preserve itself is enormous, but it stems from the very power of the mind the ego denies. This means that the ego attacks what is preserving it, which must result in extreme anxiety. That is why the ego never recognizes what it is doing. It is perfectly logical but clearly insane." (T.7.VI.3.1-4) (ACIM OE T.7.VII.56)

This Lesson starts with the idea that we are actually calling upon our own true identity when we call on God's Name. While we are One with Him, He is the Cause and the Source. We share His name, not because we are Him, but because He is our Creator, and we share His nature. He has given us His Name, just as a father gives his name to his son. Thus, we have a deep, abiding bond with Him. In this deep connection with the divine within, we are reminded that we are not these characters in the dream that we know ourselves to be with our given names. **"Your Father's Name reminds you who you are, even within a world that does not know; even though you have not remembered it."** (W.183.1.5) When we say His Name, an echo is heard in the mind, and this calls us to remember who we really are. **"God's Name can not be heard without response, nor said without an echo in the mind that calls you to remember."** (W.183.2.1) We are called to remember our true identity in that deep communion with the Christ Self within.

The Atonement Principle is our assurance that we have never changed ourselves. To be aware of the changeless Self requires deep desire and devotion to the truth. We are magnificent beings of

light and love. This awareness brings recognition of the immense angelic power that protects us. **"Say His Name, and you invite the angels to surround the ground on which you stand, and sing to you as they spread out their wings to keep you safe, and shelter you from every worldly thought that would intrude upon your holiness."** (W.183.2.2) We are releasing our worldly thoughts that are the idols we hold up as our gods. They are the things of this world we put value on, but they are actually valueless and deliver nothing. When we enter into deep communion with God, it brings healing to the sick and lifts the suffering of the world. When the mind is healed, it contributes to the One Mind like an inflated balloon that now has more air to lift it higher. That is quite a premise and points to the ministry we have in the world simply by remembering who we are.

This power is enhanced when we join with a brother. **"And should you join a brother as you sit with him in silence, and repeat God's Name along with him within your quiet mind, you have established there an altar which reaches to God Himself and to His Son."** (W.183.5.4) We can only truly join with a brother when we release our judgments and recognize the Christ in him. This may not mean that we literally sit together and repeat God's Name. What is symbolized here is the Oneness we share with everyone in which we join in truth and let go of the needs and judgments inherent in our special relationships. **"If you unite with anyone in prayer, you make him part of you."** (Song of Prayer.1.II.6.2)

"You have taught yourself to believe that you are not what you are." (T.6.III.1.8) (ACIM OE T.6.IV.40) This demonstrates the immense power of our minds since we have taught ourselves that we are something we are not. It is about recognizing that, ultimately, in undoing what we have taught ourselves, we will see there is no room for the separate me, for my individual identity, nor separation from my brother. We are all one Son, in the unity of the family of God.

In our invitation to God, Jesus tells us, **"Thus do we give an invitation which can never be refused. And God will come, and answer it Himself."** (W.183.7.1-2) Then he says, **"Think not He hears the little prayers of those who call on Him with names of idols cherished by the world. They cannot reach Him thus. He cannot hear requests that He be not Himself, or that His Son receive another name than His."** (W.183.7.3-5) How are we to understand this? Does God answer our prayers, or does He really not hear our prayers? In order to get more clarity on this question, I turned to *The Song of Prayer* that accompanies the Course. Jesus explains that there are different levels of prayer, depending on which rung of the ladder we are on, ascending back to the self.

On the beginning rungs, we ask for things we think we need. These requests come from our belief that we are in the world and are in a state of need and lack. **"To you who are in time a little while, prayer takes the form that best will suit your need."** (Song of Prayer.1.IN.2.1) **"At these levels prayer is merely wanting, out of a sense of scarcity and lack."** (S.1.II.1.5) **"These forms of prayer, or asking-out-of-need, always involve feelings of weakness and inadequacy, and could never be made by a Son of God who knows Who he is."** (S-1.II.2.1) Do these prayers get answered? Apparently, they do but only as long as they do not set us back on our journey.

When we request that the idols of the world make us happy, we are making meaningless things into gods. Yet to ask for what we think we need is not wrong. It is just that this will not advance our journey to God because getting what we want in the illusion will tempt us to stay asleep. Any answer we get to our prayers comes from the Holy Spirit in our minds, as God does not know of our dream. Asking for specifics comes from our belief that we are bodies, living in the world. When we progress on our journey, our prayer becomes less specific. **"It is possible at this level to**

continue to ask for things of this world in various forms, and it is also possible to ask for gifts such as honesty or goodness, and particularly for forgiveness for the many sources of guilt that inevitably underlie any prayer of need." (S.1.II.3.4) Until we reach the higher levels of the ladder, "Prayer now must be the means by which God's Son leaves separate goals and separate interests by, and turns in holy gladness to the truth of union in his Father and himself." (S.1.IN.2.4)

Thus, he tells us that "**You can escape all bondage of the world, and give the world the same release you found.**" (W.183.9.2) We are refocusing the mind away from what intrudes on it when we focus on God's Name. What intrudes on our minds are the things we think we want that do not serve our best interests. What we think we need are meaningless idols of the world that we believe will make us happy. They include our goals and plans, money, food, prestige, power, sex, cars, and special relationships. Everything we value in the world is essentially valueless. "**In true prayer you hear only the song.**" (S.1.I.3.4) "**Prayer is an offering; a giving up of yourself to be at one with Love.**" (S.1.I.5.5) "**The secret of true prayer is to forget the things you think you need.**" (S.1.I.4.1) "**Prayer is a stepping aside; a letting go, a quiet time of listening and loving.**" (S.1.I.5.1) "**This is not a level of prayer that everyone can attain as yet.**" (S.1.I.6.1)

Today, we are invited to experience the peace of God. "**Turn to the Name of God for your release, and it is given you. No prayer but this is necessary, for it holds them all within it.**" (W.183.10.1-2) All that is real is in our relationship with our Father. Now we come to know eternal peace, if only for a moment, as we enter the holy instant. "**And in His Name, it shall be given us.**" (W.183.11.8) In the holy instant, all is quiet and still, and our holy minds can rest in the presence of the eternal! Here, "**communication far transcends all words.**" (W.183.11.6)

Today, we are asked to "**Become oblivious to every name but His. Hear nothing else. Let all your thoughts become anchored on This. No other word we use except at the beginning, when we say today's idea but once.**" (W.183.6.2-5) When we return to the world, we will remember what the world forgot. It takes strength to be in the world but not of the world, yet we are called to be the example of peace so others may see that this is the same choice they could make. Our part is to offer forgiveness in every situation. That is what he invites us to do when he says, "**It would indeed be strange if you were asked to go beyond all symbols of the world, forgetting them forever; yet were asked to take a teaching function. You have need to use the symbols of the world a while. But be you not deceived by them as well.**" (W.184.9.1-3)

Only love is real. Everything else is just part of the dream, broken into small parts with different names. "**In this eternal still relationship in which communication far transcends all words, and yet exceeds in depth and height whatever words could possibly convey is peace eternal.**" (W.183.11.6) So let us join in the experience of this peace today, as much as possible, and trust it will be given us, as we lay aside our own ideas.

Love and blessings, Sarah
huemmert@shaw.ca

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