



LESSON 294
My body is a wholly neutral thing.

Sarah's Commentary:

Most of us have a relationship with our body of either loving it or hating it or loving and hating parts of it. Yet Jesus says that the body is neither good nor bad. (W.294.2.2) In fact, it is just an instrument---a communication device---and like everything else in our world, it can be put to a useful purpose. What is it for? What use might we put it to? Will it be given to the ego for its use or used for a holy purpose by the Holy Spirit?

This Lesson says that God did not create what is mortal and corruptible, which tells us that He did not create the body. Yet the body can serve the purpose of supporting our awakening. And when we awaken, its usefulness is over, and it can simply be laid down. Thus, it can be of service for a while and "**then to be replaced for greater good.**" (W.294.1.10)

The important thing is to come to the recognition that the body is not what we are. It was not created by God, "**And what is not created cannot be sinful nor sinless; neither good nor bad.**" (W.294.2.2) It is simply a useful tool for a while.

We are, however, urged to "**use this dream** [the body] **to help Your plan** [the plan of the Holy Spirit] **that we awaken from all dreams we made.**" (W.294.2.3) The body is useful as a vehicle to extend the message of love to our brothers and sisters. When in the service of the Holy Spirit, the body becomes a means and not an end in itself. It is also a useful indicator as a witness to what is in the mind as it can inform us in ways that our thinking mind cannot. As such, it is not helpful to deny what we are seeing or what we are feeling. Without this witness, we would not see what is in our minds to be forgiven.

As we commit to forgiveness, we increasingly recognize that our reality is a mind and with it, our identification with the body is loosened. When our main focus is the body, we remain vigilant of its care and protection, and we fear what can go wrong with it. When we mistakenly think that the body is what we are, we become very concerned about its well-being. This is not to say we should not pay attention to taking care of the body, as to do our function requires that we keep it serviceable. We can take care of the body and still keep God in the forefront of our minds. For me, being in the shower, for example, is a wonderful place to allow the mind to be washed of any concerns and to set the direction for the day. It is not important what the body is doing, but it is important where the mind is in the doing.

"And yet a neutral thing does not see death, for thoughts of fear are not invested there, nor is a mockery of love bestowed upon it." (W.294.1.5) This is an interesting thought, which basically says that guilt and fear, projected on the body, bring the experience of

sickness and death. Without guilt, we would not fear death. Yes, the body would die and decay, but it would not be experienced as punishment. It would be simply laid down when our journey of forgiveness is complete. **"This is what death should be; a quiet choice, made joyfully and with a sense of peace, because the body has been kindly used to help the Son of God along the way he goes to God. We thank the body, then, for all the service it has given us."** (Song Of Prayer.3.II.2)

We may love the body because it is working well for us. We may like its appearance and what and who it attracts into our lives. We dress it up and we love aspects of it. It may be particularly strong or healthy, and we may find the body functions well for us so we think it is pretty good, but it is still a mockery of who we are as pure love. It is symbolic of the sin that has been accepted into the mind, although buried in the unconscious, and now seen all around us. **"The mind that thinks it is a sin has but one purpose; that the body be the source of sin, to keep it in the prison house it chose and guards and holds itself at bay, a sleeping prisoner to the snarling dogs of hate and evil, sickness and attack; of pain and age, of grief and suffering."** (T.31.III.5.1) (ACIM OE T.31.III.30)

"My body, Father, cannot be Your Son. And what is not created cannot be sinful nor sinless; neither good nor bad." (W.294.2.1-2) We are being asked to recognize that, although the body is corruptible, it is not who we are. We are eternal. **"And afterwards, without a purpose, it is laid aside."** (W.294.1.7)

There are several passages in the Course that speak of our hatred for the body when it is not used as a tool for purposes of awakening. We are right to question why a loving Father would create that which is corruptible and has a short lifespan with intervening years of suffering and pain. This is simply not consistent with Who our Father is. If He has the power to create only what is perfect, why would His power not be used for only that? To create such corruptibility, as bodies in a decaying, destructible world, cannot be conceived as coming from a loving Creator. Thus, it is not possible that God could be the source of our bodies and this world. The image of a god made by the ego is the source of all this.

In the experience of the real world, we know ourselves as eternal. Our Identity is restored to us through forgiveness. Forgiveness is the means by which we cross the bridge from this world to the real world. Jesus reminds us, **"Temptation has one lesson it would teach, in all its forms, wherever it occurs. It would persuade the holy Son of God he is a body, born in what must die, unable to escape its frailty, and bound by what it orders him to feel. It sets the limits on what he can do; Its power is the only strength he has; his grasp cannot exceed its tiny reach. Would you be this, if Christ appeared to you in all His glory, asking you but this: Choose again if you would take your place among the saviors of the world, or would remain in hell, and hold your brothers there. For He has come, and He is asking this."** (T.31.VIII.1.1-6) (ACIM OE T.31.VIII.83)

He tells us not to fear temptation but to see it as an opportunity to choose again. In every difficulty, Christ calls to us to make this choice. It is just another chance to remember who we are. When we make this choice, the Holy Spirit does all the heavy lifting for us. Trying to do anything on our own to change ourselves is not helpful. In fact, it is just an intrusion on His role. Let His strength prevail. Let His Will be done.

Tomorrow morning, as I go to have my shower, wash my body, dress it up, paint the lips, and highlight the hair, I will remember that the body's urges, its requirements, its demands for food, pleasure, and rest can all be seen as just tuning up an instrument to be neither loved nor hated but used for His purposes. In that is its perfect protection. Jesus asks for our hands, our eyes, and our feet to be used in his service of being truly helpful. As the prayer in Chapter 2 reminds us, in each and every encounter:

"I am here only to be truly helpful

I am here to represent Him who sent me.

***I do not have to worry about what to say or what to do,
because He Who sent me will direct me.***

***I am content to be wherever He wishes, knowing
He goes there with me.***

***I will be healed as I let Him teach me to heal.*" (T.2.V.A.18.2-6) (ACIM OE T.4.IX.106)**

It is interesting that Helen Schucman and Bill Thetford, who brought the Course into the world, both left their bodies not long after the Course was published. Helen wrote down the Course starting in 1965 and finished it in 1972. She died in 1981, while Bill continued on with the teaching and then left his body in 1988. Helen was 72 and Bill 65 at the time of their deaths. It seems that when our function is completed here on earth, there is no reason to continue on. Of course, we don't know the state of their minds at death, but the day before he died, Bill Thetford said that he felt his function was finished and that he had forgiven everyone. The next day he left his body.

While the body is not made by love, it can be lovingly used as an instrument for healing. It is not to be denied while we still believe in its reality. It is still a useful witness to our state of mind. The people that trigger us are the gifts that help us return to the holy Self we are.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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