



Lesson 31
I am not a victim of the world I see.

Sarah's Commentary:

I really love this Lesson. It has been one of the most helpful ones for me in changing my mind about the way I have seen myself in the world. There are many ways in which we feel victimized. We set up defenses against the pain of victimization. Everyday, there is something we defend against. We feel victimized by many things, be it weather, viruses, slow service, crime, traffic, politics, wars, bills, high costs, challenging relationships, unfair practices, abuse by authority figures, or sickness. What is it that gives power to these circumstances and events, which are in and of themselves just neutral, illusory events? Obviously, it is our thoughts about them. The events are neutral, but our thoughts about them are not. Of course, this statement can be an outrage to the ego and thus create anxiety for us, because we may have suffered some very painful events in our lives.

"Again, the idea should be applied to both the world you see without and the world you see within." (W.31.1.2) Jesus is telling us that the inner and outer are both the same. When we survey our inner world, we are victimized by our own self-doubts, fears, anger, feelings of helplessness, perfectionism, competition, jealousy, possessiveness, unworthiness, betrayal, manipulation, control, revenge for old wounds, depression, anxiety, and expectations. We can escape from both the inner and outer together because the inner is the cause of the outer. **"You will escape from both together, for the inner is the cause of the outer."** (W.31.2.5)

Being a victim serves the ego. We set things up exactly as we want them. The question is, why would we want to be betrayed? Interestingly enough, we want others to hurt us because this is how we affirm that we are not responsible for the separation from God. We point our finger at the guilty ones. We conclude that we are innocent, doing our best in a difficult environment. Being a victim allows us to do certain things, and there are other things we don't have to do. It is a way we hide from ourselves and our purpose. I have a friend who sees how she uses the fact that she is a single mother because it gets her what she wants. We all use some form of this to get what we think we need from others. What we are actually doing is victimizing others in subtle ways so they will feel guilty and respond to our needs.

It is an empowering idea to see that I am not a victim of the world I see. The world I see is coming from my own thoughts, and these thoughts can be healed when I choose the miracle. It comes about when I choose to forgive the way I see now. My healing depends on my willingness to bring my mistaken perceptions to the light. If I am truly a victim of outer events, then I really am helpless because there is very little that I can do to change anything. I may have the illusion of having some control, but mostly I don't. Events just seem to happen to me.

It is at our birth that the story of our victimhood took hold. We declare we didn't ask to be born. It is the painful experiences of our childhood that makes us feel victimized. Our whole life story is

based on this. We set up defenses to protect ourselves from the pain of these past experiences. What would our lives be like without these defenses? Have you thought what your life would be like without your story? There would be ease, grace, flow, innocence, and a sense of empowerment; and it is available now. It requires that we change our story, but first, you must see your story. What are you believing you are lacking? What are you complaining about? Tune in so you can bring awareness to your thoughts of victimhood as only then can they be shifted. As your thoughts change so does your world.

Victimhood is a position very much supported in the world and even honored. Thus, to be a victim has its own rewards. What this Lesson does is undermines everything we currently believe about ourselves and the meaning we have given to the events in our lives. Jesus tells us, if we accept the truth that we are not a victim of the world we see, it is a declaration of release from our ego. It is not initially a welcomed idea. Our story of victimhood seems justified by events we experienced in our lives. It is not to say that we have not experienced some horrific events in our childhood. We are not asked to deny these experiences but to not confuse the levels at which the Course speaks. On level one, we are told that everything that seems to have happened to us, including child abuse, is illusory, and in reality, it never happened. But on the level where we think we are, we did have the experience. A Lesson such as this provides for us a different way of looking at our experiences so we can disengage from the illusion and remember our true reality. It is not about denying what has happened but about seeing it in a different light. Recognize that everyone who participated in the abusive situation experienced pain. The pain is a call for love rather than judgment. It is a call to join with Jesus so we can release our interpretations of the situation and ask for another way of seeing.

In the Text Chapter 27, Section VII "**The Dreamer of the Dream**" [ACIM OE T.27.VIII "The Illusion of Suffering"] Jesus tells us that we believe we gain salvation through suffering. It is the "**world's demented version of salvation.**" (T.27.VII.1.2) (ACIM OE T.27.VIII.62) We believe that our suffering is a result of being unjustly attacked. Again, this experience was actually chosen to keep our focus away from the real problem of guilt in the mind. The ego has told you that the shame and guilt you are feeling is a result of the trauma in your childhood. What this does is keep the problem rooted in the past where it can never be undone. The abuse we suffer is seen to be a fitting punishment for what we have done to separate ourselves from love. What we refuse to see is that we, ourselves, brought about the attack. We take no responsibility for the attack and see it as "**a thing outside.**" (T.27.VII.1.4) (ACIM OE T.27.VIII.62)

If the source is seen outside of ourselves, then obviously, there is no escape. But we can escape when we turn away from the ego's story and choose Jesus instead as our teacher. It is ultimately our decision-making minds that set it all up. It is not a conscious choice that we have made, but part of the script of our lives. It clearly looks like it is the world that is hurting us which is exactly how the ego has set it up; so we would see the world as the cause and ourselves as the effect. It is the guilt in our wrong minds that we project onto the world and now see others as the guilty ones. Jesus is showing us, in this teaching, that the mind is the cause and the world is the effect. We have reversed cause and effect, so that we feel like the world is causing us all our grief instead of our own thoughts being the cause.

The glory of being the victim is that we get to be innocent, but it is a false innocence that requires someone to be guilty. Such a setup comes at a high cost to us. The cost is that we stay in our self-made prison, and we keep others bound to the guilt we put on them. In our suffering, we believe we are atoning for our sin against God. If we suffer enough, the idea is that we will administer our own punishment onto ourselves and do to ourselves what we think God will do to us. It demonstrates our misdirected idea that God demands suffering of us. We see suffering as

somehow noble. We think our love for Him can be demonstrated by how much we have suffered. This victim stance requires that someone pay, and thus the victim becomes the victimizer.

"Suffering is an emphasis upon all that the world has done to injure you. Here is the world's demented version of salvation clearly shown. Like to a dream of punishment, in which the dreamer is unconscious of what brought on the attack against himself, he sees himself attacked unjustly and by something not himself. He is the victim of this 'something else', a thing outside himself for which he has no reason to be held responsible. He must be innocent because he knows not what he does, but what is done to him. Yet is his own attack upon himself apparent still for it is he who bears the suffering. And he cannot escape because its source is seen outside himself." (T.27.VII.1.1-7) (ACIM OE T.27.VIII.62)

Further, in Chapter 26, Jesus is basically saying, 1. It was my decision to separate from God, meaning that I chose to throw away God's love. 2. Now I feel guilty. 3. I desperately want to feel innocent. 4. I say that I didn't throw away God's love, but you took it from me. 5. I take revenge on you for what I believe you did. 6. I blame you and project my guilt onto you to achieve my innocence. Whenever I feel unfairly treated by anyone it is because I want to make you feel guilty. I can't be unfairly treated! **"Beware of the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated."** (T.26.4.1) (ACIM OE T.26.XI.88) It is such a huge temptation, isn't it?

Some time ago, I was with my mother in the emergency ward of the hospital and I had forgotten my cell phone. After five hours, I felt it was important to let the family know what was happening and where we were. I found an available phone currently in use. There was a request posted next to the telephone that in courtesy to others people not use it for more than three minutes. I waited over fifteen minutes while someone was on hold waiting for a response on the other end. I cooled my heels but was feeling increasingly impatient. My thoughts were racing with all kinds of judgments. After I was finally able to make my call, I saw the person who had been on the telephone, and she seemed to be in distress. I approached her to ask if there were anything I could do for her. She said that she had been on hold, waiting to call a cab, but she never did get through. Now my mind shifted from judgment to wanting to be truly helpful. I offered to drive her home and enjoyed a lovely time with her. I was able to see how quickly I fell into the experience of being unfairly treated, victimized by the situation only because of my thoughts about it. It came on the heels of feeling victimized by the state of events in the emergency ward. I was clearly making myself miserable. This holy encounter shifted the situation for me. When there was a willingness to let go of my temptation to see myself unfairly treated and reach out to help instead, I experienced the miracle.

Every situation can be used by the Holy Spirit for His purposes with our willingness to see it that way. Our purpose is of self-interest as we define it, yet we don't know our own best interests. I looked around and saw people that seemed to be suffering, and I felt saddened by the seeming inefficiencies of the system but reminded myself that the world was made to keep our guilt and fear intact and problems would always prevail. The world is our perfect classroom for undoing our investment in guilt. It is all perfectly orchestrated for our salvation. It always witnesses our own state of mind. My job is always to mind my own mind, using every situation as an opportunity for forgiveness and healing.

That is what this Lesson is about today. It is about looking at our thoughts. Being vigilant in looking at our thoughts without judgment is an important part of mind training. **"Try not to establish any kind of hierarchy among them. Watch them come and go as dispassionately as possible."** (W.31.3.2-3) When we are willing to look at them without

judgment, we have already called in the Holy Spirit. We are neither expressing our thoughts nor repressing them in looking at them. We watch them calmly, with no sense of hurry. We stand back from them because they are only thoughts and do not define us. Some are not better than others. When we say, "I am ashamed of that event," or "I am upset at my anger," I am judging what I am thinking and feeling, and I am taking my thoughts personally. Look at your thoughts with no special investment in them. Watch them quietly without hanging onto to any thought. They are not personal. They are just thoughts passing through the mind.

Notice how much you hang onto some thoughts like worry, upsets, anger, or sadness. The idea here is to see your thoughts come and go and recognize that they don't matter. They are meaningless. Be the witness. Stand back from them. I find that as I am able to do that, I don't get distressed when a thought of hate crosses my mind. "Oh," you might say, "but I don't have any hate thoughts. I am spiritual." When you get really aware of your thoughts, you will see that indeed there are all kinds of thoughts in your mind that you are constantly in denial about. When we deny our thoughts, they get dumped into the unconscious and then they become the ruler of our experiences and we wonder why we are not at peace. Remember Lesson 21, where Jesus said, **"You will become increasingly aware that a slight twinge of annoyance is nothing but a veil drawn over intense fury."** (W.21.2.5) We tend to dismiss these "little" irritations and tell ourselves they are nothing, yet there is no order of differences in the illusion. Every thought creates our experience.

When you are watching your thoughts, think about who is the "you" that is doing the watching. Ken Wapnick calls this watcher "the decision-maker". It is the part of the mind that is choosing the ego or the Holy Spirit. This watcher is not the "you" that you think of when you think of yourself. Thus, you are watching your ego in action. The "I" that is watching is not the "I" that you think you are.

The thing is, we identify with the ego, and that is the problem because the ego is not who we are. This ego identity will not go along willingly as you proceed on this path. Thus, you might get very anxious as you are told that what you have believed about yourself and life is not the truth. At first, the questions that come up in your mind about this path are simply suspicious. Is this the right spiritual path for me? Can I really believe what is being taught here? What will happen if I continue on this road? Then, when you start getting more serious about this work, the ego becomes vicious. This can feel terrible for a time as more and more dark thoughts surface. You may even question whether progress is really being made, and you may be tempted to leave this teaching; but, once called to awakening, we can't go back. As we go into these dark places, the beauty of it is that we are not going there alone. We will be taken to the other side of the darkness, where the love is. Courage is needed to expose the hatred, anger, rage, and unworthiness because we can't let them go if we don't look at them. Looking is all that is required of us. The Holy Spirit does the rest.

Practice requirements are set out as follows: A morning and evening period of 3-5 minutes, focusing on the idea for the day. Repeat the idea two to three times while looking slowly about you. Then close your eyes and apply the idea to your inner world. Remind yourself of the Lesson frequently throughout the day as often as possible. Use the Lesson when you are feeling under attack of any kind. Anytime you feel like anything in the world is victimizing you, repeat the idea. You will get more out of it if you say it as a declaration that you refuse to be a slave to "outer events" or to your own ego thoughts. **"The idea for today is also a particularly useful one to use as a response to any form of temptation that may arise. It is a declaration that you will not yield to it, and put yourself in bondage."** (W.31.5.1-2)

This practice is truly a declaration of release from the bondage of the idea of victim and victimizer. Since the outer world and the inner world are the same, we apply the idea to both. We are simply watching our thoughts. "Watch them come and go as dispassionately as possible." (W.31.3.3) If there is a feeling that arises, question what you must be thinking to experience the feeling generated by the thought. **"And in your freedom lies the freedom of the world."** (W.31.4.3)

Recognize that the world is a product of your thoughts. If your thoughts change, your world will change. You are not here to save the world, but to change your mind about the world, and thus your world will change. Yes, the events may be the same, but the way you see them will be different. That is the miracle.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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