



LESSON 136

Sickness is a defense against the truth.

Sarah's Commentary:

Following yesterday's Lesson about the way we defend ourselves against future possibilities through planning, we are told in this Lesson that we also defend against the truth by being sick. The purpose of sickness is to hide the truth, to attack and distort reality, (W.136.2.3) and prove that we really are bodies. **"You suffer pain because the body does, and in this pain are you made one with it."** (W.136.8.3) As more truth dawns on the mind, the ego becomes more threatened. This is again a very long Lesson and very important but can be difficult to understand. Each year that I study the Course, more glimmers of understanding come through; although sometimes, it is still a struggle. It does not qualify as easy reading! What has been helpful for me in getting this Lesson is to see that anything in the illusion, where I still am invested, is a defense against the truth.

So, yes, while sickness is a defense, so is judgment, anger, jealousy, perfectionism, withdrawal, arrogance, specialness, depression, victimhood, and on and on. In other words, whenever we engage in anything in the illusion, believing in its reality, we are keeping love at bay. We are giving reality to our thoughts rather than to God's Love. These states are mutually exclusive. We are either choosing hell or Heaven, a grievance or forgiveness. The ego is all about keeping us invested in the illusion. Sickness is a way to do just that. I know that when I am sick, the body is very much at the forefront of my attention. I identify with my sick body as what I am. A sick body is a demonstration of our vulnerability. In fact, Jesus says, **"It is a witness to your frailty, your vulnerability, and your extreme need to depend on external guidance."** (T.8.VIII.6.2) (ACIM OE T.8.VIII.76) We certainly experience this to be the case when we are sick and seek outside ourselves for respite.

This is the purpose sickness seems to serve, but it is a purpose that has no meaning because Jesus affirms that sickness is causeless. **"For then he understands as well its purpose has no meaning. Being causeless and without a meaningful intent of any kind, it cannot be at all."** (W.136.1.2-3) If the sin in the mind is the cause of sickness, and sin has no reality, then the effect (sickness) cannot be real but must be an illusion. Sickness can't be real since it is caused by a false belief in the mind. Another way to look at this is: Because the separation from God never happened, everything, including sickness, is an illusion. **"When this is seen, healing is automatic."** (W.136.1.4) Thus healing is not of the body. What needs healing is the mind's false belief in sin and guilt.

When guilt is projected on the body it becomes sick. We then believe that there is a problem in the body. This is why Jesus says, **"Like all defenses, it is an insane device for self-deception."** (W.136.2.2) We are deceived into believing that sickness is in the body and not the mind. We are further deceived into believing we are a body. Thus, it works effectively as a defense

against the truth and hides and distorts reality. **"Sickness is not an accident. Like all defenses, it is an insane device for self-deception. And like all the rest, its purpose is to hide reality, attack it, change it, render it inept, distort it, twist it, or reduce it to a little pile of unassembled parts."** (W.136.2.1-3)

We believe that there are things that happen to us in the world over which we have no control. We look for the cause outside ourselves. Jesus says, **"Sickness is a decision. It is not a thing that happens to you, quite unsought, which makes you weak and brings you suffering."** (W.136.7.1-2) It does not seem that we have decided to be sick. Apparently, this decision is made so quickly that we don't even notice how and when it was made because it is quickly covered over. It is a decision to turn to the ego for its protection when truth threatens the beliefs we hold about ourselves.

You may actually notice that, as you get closer to the truth, you experience more headaches, drowsiness, hunger, asthma attacks, stomach pains, back aches, nausea, or other kinds of bodily distress. You may also experience some kind of accident or financial setback. The ego will set up all kinds of defenses to protect itself from the truth. It is threatened by truth and wants to remind us we are bodies. The purpose of the ego is to constantly keep us rooted in the body, which the ego sees as its home. As long as we are identified with the body, we are aligned with the ego.

We can get quite distraught, if not outraged, to be told that to be sick is a choice we make. It is disconcerting to be told sickness is not something that happens to us without our agreement. **"Now are you sick, that truth may go away and threaten your establishments no more."** (W.136.7.4) Did I choose this sickness, suffering, and pain? Isn't my body just making me suffer? We think that the cause is outside the mind and that we are just the effect of it. Why is it hard to believe that I could be sick by my own choice? As this Lesson tells us, the reason is that our decision is **". . . doubly shielded by oblivion."** (W.136.5.2)

While defenses seem to be unconscious, they are actually made with our awareness. **"Defenses are not unintentional, nor are they made without awareness. They are secret, magic wands you wave when truth appears to threaten what you would believe. They seem to be unconscious but because of the rapidity with which you choose to use them."** (W.136.3.1-3) This happens so quickly that we forget. Our forgetting is the first shield of oblivion. Then we forget that we chose to forget, which is the second shield. So you can see how well-protected this defense is, and why, after all this forgetting, we believe sickness is something that just happens to us and is beyond our control. **"It is this quick forgetting of the part you play in making your 'reality' that makes defenses seem to be beyond your own control."** (W.136.5.1) By this quick forgetting, we are protecting our individuality and seeing the problem outside of us.

In order to change this, we need to be willing to reconsider the decision to be sick. **"But what you forgot can be remembered, given willingness to reconsider the decision which is doubly shielded by oblivion."** (W.136.5.2) We can't reconsider the decision if we don't know we made it. We deny our part in making this decision to prove: we are bodies, separate from the truth, and we can defeat God by saying we exist, and He does not. While we believe in what we made, it does not change our reality as God's Son. We are still as we were created. Our identity as a separate individual can't be the truth about us.

I remember, as a very young child in Sweden, living in a refugee camp and feeling vulnerable and unprotected. I made a deliberate choice to always and only rely on myself. I did not realize this until my adult years when I became aware, during time in meditation, what I had done. I had

actually made a conscious decision to push God out and rely solely on myself, but then I forgot this decision, though it ruled my life. I decided that the adults in my life were unreliable and undependable. In my judgment, they could not be trusted. It was what prompted my decision to move God off His throne and take authority over my own life. We have all made these kinds of decisions, albeit we have not always recalled them. The fact is that we have all made the decision for separation and have also disowned responsibly for that decision. My recollection of this decision as a child was just a replay of the original decision. We continue to make this same decision over and over every time we choose to side with the separate self that seems to be independent of God.

However, our decisions do not change the truth about ourselves or about God. **"What is unalterable cannot change. And what is wholly sinless cannot sin."** (W.136.11.7-8) **"Such is the simple truth. It does not make appeal to might nor triumph. It does not command obedience, nor seek to prove how pitiful and futile your attempts to plan defenses that would alter it."** (W.136.12.1-3) The Holy Spirit is the symbol of the love of God in our right minds and His healing light is always present and available to us. He never demands anything from us nor diminishes us in any way, awaiting our decision to accept the truth about what we are as we were created. All **"Truth merely wants to give you happiness, for such its purpose is."** (W.136.12.4) When we see our way does not make us happy, we will want to do what is required on behalf of our happiness. **"Defenses are plans to defeat what cannot be attacked."** (W.136.11.6) It is a futile plan to defeat God. Yes, we can choose to think that we suffer and die, but it is not God's Will, and **"God knows not of your plans to change His Will."** (136.11.1)

God does not fight our decisions but simply waits for us to change our minds. It is interesting to read that God sighs at the futility of our efforts to struggle on our own. Of course, this is just a metaphor, as God does not sigh, but it is a statement of the futility of the struggle that we seem to need to go through. We think that we can be sick and that we can die, but it isn't the truth. Yes, we can believe it, but it makes no difference to our reality. Our attempts at throwing away our gifts are really futile because Heaven will wait patiently for us to awaken to the truth, knowing **". . . with perfect certainty, that what God wills for you must be received,"** (W.136.12.5) and we will awaken because **". . . what He wills is here, and you remain as He created you."** (W.136.13.5) It is reassuring to know that what God wills for us must be received, as we are part of Him. We are a Thought in the mind of God, outside of time. There is nothing we need do to earn our way back to God because nothing has come between us and our Source. We are at home in God now. We are just not fully aware of this fact.

Our part is to watch our thoughts and bring our illusions to the truth. We can only be victims of attacks on ourselves by our own mistaken decisions. The purpose of the body is to keep us invested in thinking that we are this limited self, but we can make another choice. To do so, we must be vigilant in watching how the thoughts of sin, guilt, and fear show up in our lives. All our beliefs and values must be questioned. All our defenses must be brought to light. **"And you will recognize you practiced well by this: The body should not feel at all. If you have been successful, there will be no sense of feeling ill or feeling well, of pain or pleasure. No response at all is in the mind to what the body does. Its usefulness remains and nothing more."** (W.136.17.2-5) This is a state where we recognize the body is not our reality. It is entirely neutral. The body does not exist at all in the experience of the holy instant. The body only exists in the past and the future. When we join with the love in our minds and guilt is released, there is no awareness of the body. **"At no single instant does the body exist at all. It is always remembered or anticipated, but never experienced just now."** (T.18.VII.3.1) (ACIM OE T.18.VIII.65) It is an instant where we experience our reality as only love and peace.

When sin, fear, and guilt have been removed from the mind, we can only project the love and innocence within. The body is a figure in the dream and a projection of the mind. Until we know our reality outside this dream, the body provides a useful classroom in which we can always be reminded of where the real pain is and of where the real joy is, which is within. The kingdom of God is within. When we come to know the truth, the body's health is assured. Though there may still be the appearance of sickness, it does not affect our peace in the mind.

However, it is important to remember not to punish and attack ourselves if we do get sick. In fact, it may be a sign that we are making progress on this path and getting closer to truth, which is anathema to the ego. Or we may be experiencing stress and frustration in our lives and then sickness shows up. Staying vigilant in noticing thoughts of anger, despair, discouragement, jealousies, specialness, comparison, or whatever else shows up, is important so we can put these thoughts and feelings on the inner altar to be healed. Our part is not to deny what we are feeling, but when we become aware of a disturbance in the mind, to simply bring it to the truth. The Holy Spirit will do the rest. Do not listen to the ego that tells you to deny or repress your feelings or to try to fix your thinking. The ego is a liar and knows nothing. Always remember to turn to the Holy Spirit and leave the healing to Him.

Separation was the way down the ladder into the darkness of this world and miracles are the way back. Jesus reassures us that once we start on this path, the way is made simple and serene. The only thing that maintains the dream is our choice for the ego as our teacher. It will never point the way to happiness. And yes, it will get more vicious as we get closer to the truth because its existence depends on our allegiance to its thought system.

Truth will never be thrust on us but only awaits our welcome. Isn't that beautiful? There is no coercion. Power does not need to be coercive. We are called to be a demonstration of the truth, without proselytizing it to anyone. It is all for our own awakening, based on our own Call. Everyone will eventually arrive at this place when they are ready. When life becomes sufficiently painful, everyone becomes motivated to join the great crusade whether in this lifetime or the next. Everyone will eventually come to this decision.

Ask the truth to come to you and set you free today, and truth will come for it has never been apart from you. Start with the healing prayer, "***Sickness is a defense against the truth. I will accept the truth of what I am, and let my mind be wholly healed today.***" (W.136.15.6-7)

"Yet this protection needs to be preserved by careful watching. If you let your mind harbor attack thoughts, yield to judgment or make plans against uncertainties to come, you have again misplaced yourself, and made a bodily identity which will attack the body, for the mind is sick." (W.136.19.1-2) This is our function in healing, which is to watch our thoughts of separation and notice our defenses. Ask for help to let these thoughts go so you won't keep hurting yourself with thoughts of self-attack. If thoughts are to be healed, we must become aware of them. Keeping them in the dark keeps our defenses intact. **"Defenses are not unintentional, nor are they made without awareness. They are secret, magic wands you wave when truth appears to threaten what you would believe. They seem to be unconscious, but because of the rapidity with which you choose to use them."** (W.136.3.1-3)

"Do not be confused about what must be healed, [which is the mind's decision for the ego] but tell yourself:

"I have forgotten what I really am, for I mistook my body for myself. Sickness is a defense against the truth. But I am not a body. And my mind cannot attack. So I cannot be sick." (W.136.20.2-7)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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