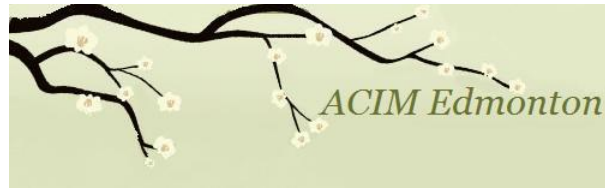


ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 39 My holiness is my salvation.

Sarah's Commentary:

What we are being saved from is our guilt. When our guilt is released, we will know our holiness, which is the opposite of guilt. Thus, salvation is the opposite of hell. Our guilt is what keeps us in hell. There is no hell, with the exception of the experience we have as a result of our belief in sin, guilt, and fear.

The glossary developed by the Circle of Atonement says the following about guilt:

"Guilt's ultimate basis is the belief that a) we attacked and separated from God, thus b) murdered our divine innocence and turned ourselves into egos, who now c) deserve death and hell. This belief is utterly false, for a) we are incapable of sinning or separating, b) cannot remake ourselves and c) cannot die. Hence, there is no such thing as the *state* of guilt. There is only the unfounded *feeling* of guilt. Guilt is at the core of our experience here. It maintains linear time, for it rests on *past* mistakes and demands *future* punishment. (see T.13.I.8-9) (ACIM OE T.11.X.96,97) It made the physical world, which is why the world constantly seems to be punishing us. (see T.13.IN.2-4) (ACIM OE T.11.X.86,87) It is the essence of our perception of the world. It is the sole cause of all pain. We think that feeling guilt is honest humility which motivates us to obey God's laws. Yet guilt is purely an ego device for arrogantly demonstrating that we are separate from God and should fear Him. Guilt maintains the ego's existence. For this reason, the ego is *attracted* to guilt. Thus, the ego tells us to "sin" in order to obtain certain pleasures, to attack in order to find safety and to project guilt onto others in order to rid ourselves of guilt. Yet the real motivation behind all of these, and their real result is the accumulation of more guilt. Since guilt is the only thing that keeps us from God, the journey home consists entirely of teaching and learning the unreality of guilt through forgiveness." [Circle of Atonement, Glossary on Guilt]

"If you identify with the ego, you must perceive yourself as guilty. Whenever you respond to your ego you will experience guilt, and you will fear punishment. The ego is quite literally a fearful thought. However ridiculous the idea of attacking God may be to the sane mind, never forget that the ego is not sane." (T.5.V.3.5-8) (ACIM OE T.5.VII.62)

The foundation of guilt is that we believe we separated from God and thus killed our divine innocence, turned ourselves into egos, and now we believe we deserve death and hell. While we can't consciously connect with that foundational event, we can and do experience guilt as a result of things we have done, not done, thought, and felt. In fact, we live in a constant state of underlying guilt.

Jesus addresses the core question in this Lesson, which is to ask, **"If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?"** (W.39.2.1) He responds by saying, **"This is not difficult, surely."** (W.38.2.2) He

says this because it is not at all ambiguous. We hesitate because we don't believe guilt is hell. If we did, we would not choose it. We would not even need this Course if we believed guilt is hell. In fact, **"If you did, you would see at once how direct and simple the text is, and you would not need a workbook at all. No one needs practice to gain what is already his."** (W.39.2.5-6) As long as we see ourselves in this separated state of guilt, it is clear we don't know who we really are.

We think we don't want the guilt. Yet we do want our individuality and the body and the world. With them comes guilt, and that is what the Course means by attraction to guilt. Unquestionably, we don't want the experience of guilt in ourselves. In other words, we do want our separate identity, but we don't want the guilt. The ego has an answer for this condition. It says, "Fine. All you need to do is see your brother as the guilty one and then you don't have to see guilt in yourself." And that is what we do. We love to see guilt in others rather than see it in ourselves because this is how we can keep it real in ourselves. Of course, this strategy is hidden from our awareness. We don't realize, it is by seeing our guilt in others that we keep it in ourselves. Only when we see that this is what we are doing and that it keeps us from our own happiness, we are motivated to change. Until we see this strategy keeps us in hell, we continue to listen to the ego's counsel, which is to keep our guilt hidden by projecting it onto others.

We fear to look at our guilt because we still want to hang onto our individual self. It is why Jesus shows us that we are afraid of love. It is the reason we resist this teaching. While the Course is simple, it does not seem that way to our complex minds, which are filled with guilt and fear. Thus, the undoing process is gently designed; and we go as slow or as fast as our fear will allow. We are assured that we will not be thrust into Heaven. As long as we are invested in our individual existence, we will think this world of guilt is a better alternative than to wake up to the truth of who we are.

Jesus says that every time we cry, regardless of the situation, we are actually crying for our lost innocence. The truth is that we have not lost our innocence, our divinity, or our holiness, but we think we have. As long as we continue to feel guilty, we are showing Jesus he is wrong and we are right about who we think we are. The whole focus of the Course is to show us the way that will free us from our guilt. **"The ego is the choice for guilt; the Holy Spirit the choice for guiltlessness. The power of decision is all that is yours."** (T.14.III.4.2-3) (ACIM OE T.13.VIII.68) Later we are told, **"You are guilty or guiltless, bound or free, unhappy or happy."** (T.14.III.4.6) (ACIM OE T.13.VIII.68)

"The miracle teaches you that you have chosen guiltlessness, freedom and joy. It is not a cause, but an effect. It is the natural result of choosing right, attesting to your happiness that comes from choosing to be free of guilt. Everyone you offer healing to returns it. Everyone you attack keeps it and cherishes it by holding it against you. Whether he does this or does it not will make no difference; you will think he does." (T.14.III.5.1-6) (ACIM OE T.13.VIII.69) Yet we yearn to know our divine goodness, and long to return home to our Self. **"You have not lost your innocence. It is for this you yearn. This is your heart's desire. This is the voice you hear, and this the call which cannot be denied. The holy Child remains with you. His home is yours."** (W.182.12.1-6) There is no substitute for the divine innocence of our true nature even though the ego is quite prepared to offer substitutes. It tries to show us how we might achieve self-esteem, respect, worthiness, power, status, special relationships, and things of this world to make us happy; but none of them will take the place of our desire to know our holiness.

We have become so used to our underlying anxiety that we are mostly not even aware of it or the thoughts that produce the feelings of anxiety. We need to start attending to our thoughts by being vigilant in watching them. The reason for this is that we can't heal what we deny. We are cautioned to look at these thoughts and feelings casually. In other words, don't judge them or make yourself wrong as you watch your mind. Jesus tells us that unhealthy denial is when we attempt to conceal our thoughts and feelings. Our unloving thoughts are just mistakes. It is not helpful to crucify ourselves for them. To do so is to hinder the healing process. To look at our thoughts without judgment is to look from above the battleground. From this perspective, we are looking at them with the Holy Spirit, and from this place, we recognize the illusory nature of these thoughts. **"It (miracle, forgiveness) merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false."** (W.P.II.Q.13.1.2) **"Forgiveness, on the other hand, is still, and quietly does nothing."** (W.P.II.Q.1.4.1) To accept the illusory nature of our thoughts is to recognize that nothing real has occurred. It means our perceived sins are not real. They can only be forgiven when we are willing to see that nothing real has occurred.

Remember, we are not trying to make ourselves into more loving people. Holiness is already ours. This is why the Lesson reminds us, **"My holiness is my salvation."** (W.39) We have just hidden our holiness behind a cloud of guilty, fearful thoughts. Those thoughts can be released with the help of the Holy Spirit so the love we are can come to our awareness. There is nothing we need to do.

Why the resistance? The ego depends on our continuing to feel guilty. It has taught us to project our guilt, but we just end up feeling more guilty. We think we deserve punishment so we create situations to deliver it to us. We think if we can get the world to punish us, we can relieve some of the guilt we feel. It is like feeling better after we were spanked when we were kids because we knew we had done wrong and deserved punishment. Until we take full responsibility for our guilt and our attacks, the cycle continues. Trying to manage our guilt by denying it, projecting it, or diminishing it, keeps us in hell.

We are being asked to look at our self-attacking thoughts as mistakes only to be corrected so we can know our innocence as well as know the innocence of our brothers. But won't this exonerate them from the terrible deeds they have done? That is our fear, isn't it? And that is why we keep ourselves and others in this game of guilt. We think guilt keeps us and others from doing wrong, when, in fact, all it does is to keep us feeling guilty. Jesus reminds us we can't give the world what we don't have. **"You cannot give what you do not have. A savior must be saved."** (W.39.3.3-4) It is important to remember that the world is just a reflection of what is in our minds. Therefore, to see our brother's innocence is to know our own. Giving and receiving are the same. The world is saved when we are saved because it is just a projection of our own thoughts. When we are healed, there is no world to be saved.

Why does this seem so difficult for us to get? If we got it, the Course would be very simple to us. All we would need would be the introduction to the text. As complicated as the Course may sound to us now, it is actually our native tongue! What makes it difficult is only our unwillingness to understand. Our lack of total willingness is because our investment in the world, the body, and our individuality are really important to us. In fact, this investment is where we think our happiness lies.

To us, the state of guilt in which we live is what we accept as reality. Once we experience a state of defenselessness, all of a sudden something we did not understand in the Course becomes incredibly clear. It means we are no longer defending against what we are told. When we bring healed perception to the information, it resonates deeply with new understanding. The ego creates

clouds of complexity. By trying to put Course teaching into our ego framework to make sense of it, we are still trying to integrate the truth into the illusion. We need to be patient with ourselves as we learn this new language. We are still babies, and in this process, we may experience some disorientation. Look at any disorientation that comes up as a sign of progress. It means we have released some of our attachment to the ego. The fear of the light, which we are so defended against, has now lifted somewhat.

Because of our defenses and our projections, we don't see the depth and horror of our own guilt. We don't see it is our own unloving thoughts that keep us in hell. We still think there are other reasons that make our lives difficult, whether it is our childhood difficulties, our relationship issues, other's attacks on us, our financial issues, or health problems. We just don't get that guilt is hell. We have learned to live with our guilt and manage it by defending against it. We don't really experience our guilt as hell. In fact, we are motivated to keep ourselves guilty. How do we know that? We know that because we hold onto the desire to attack and see others guilty just to prove we are not who God says we are. Instead, we are trying to prove to ourselves that we are really attacking guilty sinners, whether we attack by thought, word, or deed.

Jesus says God does not know unholiness. It would follow that he does not know of this world, which is a world of unholiness, but he asks us to consider logically, "**Can it be that He does not know His Son?**" (W.39.4.6) God knows us only in our holiness, not this illusory separated self. We hate feeling guilty and do everything not to feel this way. We deny, project, make excuses, and make others responsible. We do anything we can to not feel guilty, but the only effective strategy is to watch our thoughts and bring them to the light of healing.

You are asked today to ". . . **search out your unloving thoughts in whatever form they appear; uneasiness, depression, anger, fear, worry, attack, insecurity and so on.**" (W.39.6.2) Any unloving thought, no matter how insignificant we think it to be, causes suffering and results in more guilt. Yet the guilt is not real. The truth is we are already holy and just don't know it. "**My holiness is my salvation.**" (W.39) What we want to do is bring our unloving thoughts for healing so we can be released from guilt and get in touch with our holiness. How do we do this? We are given a process here to do the practice.

We have four longer practice periods today of five minutes each. We are encouraged to take a longer time for each, beyond the five minutes. Remember the importance of doing the Lesson first thing in the morning and last thing at night; more rather than longer sessions are preferable.

Begin by repeating the idea to yourself. Then, with closed eyes, search out your unloving thoughts in any form they appear (e.g., uneasiness, depression, anger, fear, worry, attack, insecurity, etc.). Make no exceptions and treat each thought the same. With each, say, "**My unloving thoughts about _____ are keeping me in hell. My holiness is my salvation.**" (W.39.8.3-4) The practice is about searching out your unloving thoughts and bringing them to the Holy Spirit. Intersperse the practice with several periods of just repeating the idea slowly, or relaxing and not thinking about anything. Also, you may want to vary the words for this idea, as long as the meaning is maintained. (He knows sustained concentration may be difficult at this stage.)

Conclude by repeating the question, "**If guilt is hell, what is its opposite?**" (W.39.10.5) It is our holiness.

Use frequent reminders throughout the day with variations in the form, as long as the content of the Lesson remains focused on forgiveness. When you are tempted by any unloving thought today, remind yourself your holiness is your salvation. Respond quickly to your ego's temptation to feel

guilt and anger. It is much easier to change your mind with your first thought than when you get into a long story about the situation and justify your position.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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