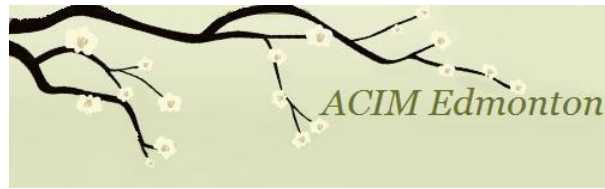


## ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



### **LESSON 153** **In my defenselessness my safety lies.**

#### **Sarah's Commentary:**

This is a particularly long Lesson, the teaching is very deep, and it might not be the way we think now. Many of us believe our safety lies in our defenses and that we must protect ourselves against the threats of this world. Jesus starts by telling us the nature of this world we made is one where we feel threatened. We tend to deny this. I was just listening to the song, "It's a Wonderful World," which reflects what we mostly do our best to believe about the world; but Jesus describes it in a way that totally refutes anything beautiful about the world. When we get really honest about our lives in the world, we can see how it is characterized by changes, problems, twists of fate and fortune, bitter jests, brief relationships, and gifts that seem to come and then get taken away. And of course, the body ages, gets sick, and finally dies.

All of this is part of our separated state from God. With separation came a world made as a defense against God's Love, and in fact, an attack on God. We believe God will catch up with us for our sin of separating from Him and punish us with His wrath. God is what we are ultimately defending against, but there is no need for defense, as there is no problem. The ego made it all up. Yet as long as we believe in the ego's myth that we have sinned against God and are guilty, we will run away from Him. We do our best to defend against all the trials of this world until our plans and strategies ultimately overcome us. Jesus affirms, "**The world gives rise but to defensiveness.**" (W.153.2.1)

When we feel threat, we feel justified in defending against it, whether the threat is germs we believe can make us sick, financial markets that can crash, people who can hurt us, or any number of things we protect ourselves from. All the threats in our lives make us fearful and angry, and when we are angry, attack seems like a reasonable response. We thus feel justified in our anger and believe that it will serve to protect us from harm. Our attacks seem righteous because after all, we reason, we are simply defending against what we believe others are going to do to us! Everyone in the world uses the same rationale for their attacks and defenses. They reason they are simply responding to unjustified attacks and thus defenses are necessary.

This all arises as a result of the choice made by the Son of God for the ego. The ego has convinced us that our safety lies with it. It has woven a tale of sin, guilt, and punishment for what the Son of God has seemingly done in destroying Creation and running away from God. Now there is so much fear in the mind that the only escape is to make a world and body and become totally preoccupied with its problems, rather than go back to the mind and recognize the fallacy of this story. But there is a way out. The solution is to recognize that everything the ego has told us, and what we have come to believe, is false. We can choose against the ego by being willing to look at the guilt in the mind projected onto the world and to choose again. The attacks seemingly coming at us from the world are, in fact, our own projected thoughts of attack in our own minds. These thoughts

originated with our belief that we attacked God to win our separate, individual selves. When we recognize that it all starts in our own minds, then it is apparent that the power is in us to make a different choice. We can make a choice to heal our misperceptions about ourselves, the world, and God and thus experience a benign world.

When we choose not to look at the attack thoughts in our own mind, then we perceive them in everyone else and see hostility and guilt all around us while we maintain the "face of innocence." We have chosen to achieve our own perceived innocence by choosing to see guilt outside of our minds. Our hope is that God is watching and will punish the guilty ones, and we will escape the punishment we fear. Now we are being invited to question all of this. Jesus lays out how the ego set all of this up, and how we can become aware that we have a choice and can withdraw our attacks on the world. We can look within, take back responsibility for our guilt, and start the healing process. Until we are willing to recognize the source of all attack is in our own minds, we will feel justified in being angry and for defending against attacks that seem to originate in the world.

All defenses make us feel weak and vulnerable. **"There seems to be no break nor ending in the ever-tightening grip of the imprisonment upon the mind."** (W.153.3.3) It is a cycle of attack and defense where someone always has to lose for us to get what we want. Yet Jesus is showing us a way out by helping us to see that the answer is to return to the mind where the solution to our one and only problem of separation lies. He is showing us how this was all set up so we could see the choice we could make in every situation. It is right in front of us. The decision we could make is always for Heaven or hell, life or death, awakening or sleeping, forgiveness or grievances, love or fear.

In this Lesson, Jesus brings to our awareness how our **"defensiveness is a double threat."** (W.153.2.3) We may wonder how, by being defensive, we are threatened further. To us, the defenses we set up, both physical and psychological, seem like safety and protection against all kinds of threat. But Jesus says there are two reasons why defensiveness is a double threat: One, our defenses simply attest to our weaknesses; and two, they just don't work! If they did work, we would indeed feel safe. Instead, there is a feeling of weakness and lack of safety, regardless of what we do to try to protect ourselves. We feel attacked both by events seemingly outside of ourselves and from our own inner sense of ourselves. **"Now are the weak still further undermined, for there is treachery without and still a greater treachery within."** (W.153.2.5) When we are not aware that there is any other choice, we just keep turning to the ego for protection.

Where is our escape? If we look to the world, it is attacking us, and if we look to our own defenses, they undermine us and affirm our weakness. **"It is essential to realize that all defenses do what they would defend."** (T.17.IV.7.1) (ACIM OE T.17.V.33) This is the vicious cycle of our lives of **"Attack, defense; defense, attack,"** (W.153.3.2) where we feel trapped, vulnerable, threatened, and unsafe. Our peace of mind is thus sabotaged by our own defensiveness, and it is an extremely costly price we pay to maintain this cycle. In fact, **"Defenses are the costliest of all the prices which the ego would exact."** (W.153.4.1)

Basically, nothing going on in our lives is as difficult, challenging, problematic, or costly as what we have made real in our own minds, which is extremely devastating to our sense of safety and peace. The reason for this is that we keep seeing the problems outside of our own minds and never go to the source for the answer. This keeps us spinning our wheels trying to solve problems we are convinced are external, but never solving the only problem we have.

While we may look calm and in control on the outside, Jesus asks us to consider the terror going on inside of us. We have learned to mask, organize, control, and manage our lives to the best of our ability, but it can never work, no matter how capable we appear in the world. The assaults just keep coming; whether we feel the threat due to world issues, such as war, greed, economic collapse, climate change, food additives; or personal issues, such as divorce, job loss, weather, crime, drugs, and death. The threats of this world keep us on high alert. Yet Jesus assures us that peace can be available in the midst of this grim picture. It is not helpful to see it through rose-colored glasses and overlook our terror, but instead, we need to look directly at what we are holding in the mind and be willing to put it on the inner altar.

We hold the belief that attack is coming at us from the world, but our real fear is that we have denied God and that He will extract from us what we believe we stole from Him. Since He is all-powerful, He will eventually get us in the end and win the battle that we perceive we are in. As long as we are the slaves of our defenses, being ruled and controlled by them, we see threat all around us and live in fear. But what are we really defending against? Jesus says that the real threat to us is God's Love. We are afraid to know this love. We made this world, this body, and this identity, and we like what we have made. It may be hurtful, but it is familiar.

We fear we have thrown away our identity as the Christ Self and exchanged it for the idol of specialness, which is our perceived self. Now we protect that idol, which is what we think we are. **"For you behold the Son of God as but a victim to attack by fantasies, by dreams, and by illusions he has made;"** (W.153.5.5) Yet we cannot and have not changed ourselves, for none of it is real. Our defensiveness is just an illusion of safety. We have the illusion of threat and the illusion of safety, and it is all coming from our own minds.

Once again, the guilt we hold in the mind is the culprit. When we hold the belief that we are guilty, we conceive of God as angry and that He is behind the attacks we are getting from the world. God is the author, in our deceived minds, of the lacks we experience in the world, the wars, the nasty neighbors, the infestation of lice, the tornadoes, the price of gas, the lack of work, and the sickness we experience. It matters not what the attacks are. We see God working through all of these attacks and thus getting back at us for what we have done. How could our defenses ever protect us from that? **"What can save you now from your delusion of an angry god, whose fearful image you believe you see at work in all the evils of the world?"** (W.153.7.3) Can you see this belief working in your own life? Has the thought crossed your mind in which you wonder why God is making you suffer? Or perhaps you wonder why God has abandoned you. There are many such thoughts in which we make God responsible for our experiences.

**"We look past dreams today, and recognize that we need no defense because we are created unassailable, without all thought or wish or dream in which attack has any meaning."** (W.153.9.1) When we look from above the battleground, we can recognize attack as the **"silly game a tired child might play, when he becomes too sleepy to remember what he wants."** (W.153.6.4) No, we don't see it this way when we are on the battleground where our problems take on a great seriousness. It is very challenging to meet attack with forgiveness, yet it is possible when we recognize we are not the dream figures, but the dreamer of this dream. If we are dreaming it, we can choose a gentler dream. Will all of our difficulties disappear? No, but how we see them will shift. If we can step back in the face of attack, step aside and ask for help, we are making progress. The choice we make in each instance is whether we will respond with the Holy Spirit or the ego. When we choose with the Holy Spirit, we learn that **"Defenselessness is strength,"** (W.153.6.1) for it rests on awareness of Christ's strength in us, a strength so great it could never be attacked.

Jesus asks, **"What defense could possibly be needed by the ones who are among the chosen ones of God, by His election and their own as well?"** (W.153.10.6) We have chosen to contribute to the healing of our own minds by choosing defenselessness, by choosing the strength of Christ in us, and by reaching out and joining with our brothers, instead of choosing to defend our own weakness. It puts us in a position where we can't be attacked because we choose not to defend, knowing the truth about what we are. Jesus is a model for us in this, showing us his invulnerability in the face of seeming attack. Like him, we can offer salvation to everyone by reaching out to the world with love. Defenselessness **"testifies to recognition of the Christ in you."** (W.153.6.2) It is strength so powerful defense is not necessary. We have many examples of this in people like Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Peace Pilgrim, the Dalai Lama, and many others.

**"We are created unassailable,"** (W.153.8.1) and can only know it when we undertake our purpose as a minister of God. How this is illustrated is for us to be an example of the choice we have made in our minds. Our behavior in the world reflects our choice. Our peace and happiness are fully guaranteed, as we walk in trust. We can't be assailed when we rest untouchable within the light of our holy purpose. When we know the Self we are, we stop defending and, instead, we help our brothers to make the choice we have made. **"And while you fail to teach what you have learned, salvation waits and darkness holds the world in grim imprisonment."** (W.153.11.3) We learn to be defenseless with each moment when we can demonstrate it. When we meet attack with defenselessness, we are communicating to our brother that his attack has no effect, and thus, he is innocent. In turn, we are learning that our seeming attack on God had no effect.

Jesus urges us to give up the silly childish game we have been playing. **"You who have played that you are lost to hope, abandoned by your Father, left alone in terror in a fearful world made mad by sin and guilt; be happy now."** (W.153.13.1) He says it's time to be done with this silly childish game and realize that there is a happy game we can play on this earth. By our practicing today, we could bring the last chapter of our happy game on earth closer to the end. We are now no longer interested in playing the game of defensiveness against God but choosing instead a happy game where we bring the message of hope and defenselessness to our brothers. **"We will not play such childish games today. For our true purpose is to save the world, and we would not exchange for foolishness the endless joy our function offers us."** (W.153.8.1-2)

It is so easy to get defensive when we forget that every attack is a call for love. Instead, we take these attacks as if they were assaults on us and can get quite indignant in defending our character. When we perceive attack coming from a brother in pain, it takes great effort and intention to see all of it as a call for love. To be invulnerable from attack, we must connect to our inner core of strength, which is our right mind where the Holy Spirit dwells. When we no longer believe the accusations are true about us, then they have no place to land in us. We know the truth and are strong in that truth. **"Now a quiet time has come, in which we put away the toys of guilt, and lock our quaint and childish thoughts of sin forever from the pure and holy minds of Heaven's children and the Son of God."** (W.153.13.3)

Henceforth, we will be following the practice instructions for quite a while so we need to look at them very specifically and note these instructions because they will continue until Lesson 170. They will not be repeated again except for brief directions in the Lessons to follow. We will now be relying on our own intentions and willingness as to the length of time we give to our practice. **"And as distraction ceases to arise to turn us from our purpose, we will find that half an hour is too short a time to spend with God."** (W.153.15.5)

We watch our thoughts throughout the day for the temptation to defend ourselves. **"We call upon His strength each time we feel the threat of our defenses undermine our certainty of purpose. We will pause a moment, as He tells us, 'I am here'."** (W.153.19.5-6) It is up to us to make this choice for God's strength. We won't know the benefits to ourselves unless we make this choice. When we are triggered by a seeming attack, we need to remember to stop and call on His help.

Perhaps most important is where he says, **"Your practicing will now begin to take the earnestness of love, to help you keep your mind from wandering from its intent. Be not afraid nor timid. There can be no doubt that you will reach your final goal. The ministers of God can never fail, because the love and strength and peace that shine from them to all their brothers come from Him. These are His gifts to you. Defenselessness is all you need to give Him in return. You lay aside but what was never real, to look on Christ and see His sinlessness."** (W.153.20.1-7)

It is a time of heartfelt desire to know ourselves without the fear and timidity of uncertainty. We simply cannot fail to reach our goal.

Love and blessings, Sarah  
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