

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 301 **And God Himself shall wipe away all tears.**

Sarah's Commentary:

What is it that makes us weep? We have been told over and over in this Course that there is nothing in the world that can cause us pain and suffering even though to us it does not seem that way. We are learning that the only cause of pain is our own thoughts. The world is not real. What brings us pain is the belief that we are guilty. We project this guilt onto the world, and now see that the guilt looking back at us. It is our judgments, our interpretations, and our meanings that we put on situations and events that bring suffering and pain, and so we weep. Events are just neutral. As Jesus clearly reminds us, ***"Father, unless I judge I cannot weep. Nor can I suffer pain, or feel I am abandoned or unneeded in the world."*** (W.301.1.1-2)

Only my unhealed perceptions bring suffering and tears. If a body leaves me, I suffer. If another body does not accept me, I am hurt. If a body dies, I feel abandoned. In other words, I am the one who gives meaning to these events. I then feel like a victim of what others seem to do to me. There are those whom I see as victimizers and those whom I see as victims. Yet these perceptions that I hold are just thoughts about what I believe to be happening. Events in themselves are neutral. Jesus reminds us that not only should we not give meaning and interpretation to anything, but that indeed we can't know what anything is for. We simply can't judge. We are incapable of judging because we can't see the end from the beginning. When we experience adversity, we don't know how it can be a positive contribution to our lives. How can we judge it? When we do, we will always suffer.

There are no problems. The only problems are in our own mind. The world is not unfair, unjust, or unfriendly to us, making us feel like hapless victims. As the oft-repeated lines in Chapter 21 say, ***"I am responsible for what I see. I choose the feelings I experience, and I decide upon the goal I would achieve. And everything that seems to happen to me I ask for, and receive as I have asked."*** (T.21.II.2.3-5) (ACIM OE T.21.III.3.15) We are asked to deceive ourselves no longer that we are helpless in the face of what has been done to us. All we have to do is to admit that we have been mistaken and ***"all effects of your mistakes will disappear."*** (T.21.II.2.7) (ACIM OE T.21.III.3.16) It sounds simple, doesn't it, yet it is indeed challenging. It is empowering to realize we have set up our lives and our experiences perfectly for our learning and undoing, and now we can choose to see everything differently, according to our decisions. The choice is always, whether or not to judge or to forgive.

Jesus tells us, ***"It is impossible the Son of God be merely driven by events outside of him. It is impossible that happenings that come to him were not his choice. His power of decision is the determiner of every situation in which he seems to find himself by chance or accident. No accident nor chance is possible within the***

universe as God created it, outside of which is nothing." (T.21.II.3.1-4) (ACIM OE T.21.III.3.17)

Outside of what God created, which is the eternal, the world we made is nothing. Jesus tells us, **"The overlooking of the battleground is now your purpose."** (T.23.IV.4.7) (ACIM OE T.23.V.50) When we are able to put some distance between our thoughts and become the observer of them, we can smile in amusement at the battleground. **"Be lifted up, and from a higher place look down upon it. From there will your perspective be quite different. Here in the midst of it, it does seem real. Here you have chosen to be part of it. Here murder is your choice. Yet from above, the choice is miracles instead of murder."** (T.23.IV.5.1-6) (ACIM OE T.23.V.51) Of course, the way we experience the battleground is not amusing to us when we believe in its reality. In fact, it can feel very painful and even tragic and generally does, but whenever we choose to take a moment to look at our thoughts about the situation and are truly willing to have them healed, we have taken another step toward awakening from this dream.

When we step out of this seeming battleground of our painful thoughts, we recognize the role we have taken in this drama called life. When we look at our thoughts with courage and honesty, we become the observer, recognizing that the characters in the dream are playing parts that can assist us in our healing. Don't try to dismiss them as unimportant, insignificant, or inconsequential. Don't try to talk yourself out of your feelings, or tell yourself you shouldn't be feeling this way, or that you need to be more positive. The only way to truth is through the darkness---not by denying it, but by looking at it. We go through fear to love. It does not matter how long it takes. Time is given us for healing, and when we use it for that purpose, everything that happens is not good or bad, but purposeful.

When we look with honesty at what is coming up for us, we may notice: thoughts of envy over someone's success, fear over some financial losses, anger as a result of some miscommunication, distress about the pile of things we believe we must do or accomplish, resentment about obligations we feel toward a family member, sadness at being disappointed or betrayed by a friend, and so it goes. Unless we look at our thoughts and connect with our feelings around these kinds of situations, they keep reoccurring. We need great honesty, courage, and willingness if we are to heal our wrong-minded perspectives. We need to see that all suffering we experience comes from our own thoughts, projected out and reflected back at us. It does appear as though things are happening to us with no responsibility on our part. Yet we have reversed cause and effect. The cause is always our own mind and the world is the effect.

For example, if someone betrays me, I justify my feelings of anger and sadness. I give meaning to what someone seems to have done to me. I have given my thoughts power and believe the betrayal is a fact that can't be denied. If I insist on my version of reality, I will experience it and see it as outside of myself. To forgive this, I must start by acknowledging that perhaps I am wrong about the way I see this situation. The reality is, we are always wrong in the way we see events in our lives. The reality is, we can't judge anything. We just don't know. While we believe that our experiences prove us right, all they do is lend proof to what we already believe. The belief we are holding is that we can be betrayed. Forgiveness allows this belief to be undone when we see our investment in it. We are invested in proving over and over again that we are separate from our brothers.

The truth is, I have set up the betrayal. I did it by establishing certain rules in my mind about friendship. If those rules are "betrayed," I have a grievance. Yet the truth is, my friend is innocent regardless of his behavior, just as I am. He has the freedom to be himself, just as I have that same freedom. Forgiveness allows me to stop insisting that my thoughts, beliefs, and rules for relationships, with all the expectations that go with them, are true. We must be totally willing to have the meaning that we have given every situation to be undone. We must recognize that the world is simply a world of our own thoughts. **"Truth will correct all errors in my mind."** (W.107) We are not the ones that do the correction. Our part is to be willing to look behind our defenses and inquire about what we are believing and valuing.

Lesson 93 reminds us that we have a horribly negative self-concept that we harbor within our mind. It is deeply hidden and far beneath the surface, yet we are convinced it is true. Every experience we have arises from the unconscious pain held in the mind. We try to cover it up with "niceness" and with a lifetime of pursuing love, safety, pleasure, and security, which always eludes us. We don't want to see the darkness in us, but the darkness is not the truth. It is the ego telling us not to look there because underneath it all is love. It is what we are. The ego does not want us to discover this because that would be its demise. Like a parasite on our holy minds, it is the part of the mind we have come to identify with. Yet as we learn to become the watcher of our thoughts, rather than identify with them, we distance ourselves from this false identity.

We must first observe the ego, and only then can we choose to deny it has any power to affect our reality. This world is the manifestation of a choice within our minds to attack and reject the Love of God. Thus, we now hold the thought system that the attack on God makes us the winner. What have we won? We have won our separate, unique, and individual self. Now we project this thought system onto everyone else, believing our victory comes at the defeat of others. Thus, it would be impossible not to see expressions of hatred, specialness, selfishness, and fear because that is the nature of our egoic thought system in the mind. When we see it on the screen, we are seeing our own shadow. As we bring all these perceptions, judgments, and condemning thoughts to the Holy Spirit and ask His help to look at them with Him, they are released. Again and again, we are reminded to look honestly at how attracted we are to seeing differences and judging others for their faults. This is second nature to us, but it is not a sin. We are just mistaken. We thought we could gain as a result of our attacks, but we have been wrong. Once we admit this, we can be taught.

When we learn that beneath all our fears, unworthiness, anger, hatred, comparisons, and neediness is only our true essence of love, we recognize how wrong we have been about ourselves. We now approach everyone, who is in the same boat with us, with much more compassion and kindness. We recognize that everyone is just calling to be seen for who they really are, just as we have the same calling in us. We can't do this when we deny how we are feeling or what beliefs we are tenaciously holding onto as true. Our reactions and observations are an invitation to become aware of them, and through them, to see the judgments that we are making in every moment.

Paying attention to what we think and say is good practice for the kind of mind training required of us. Our thoughts point to the beliefs and judgments we hold about everything. Now we have a choice available to us. We are no longer on automatic pilot, responding to what the ego demands. We can instead bring our thoughts to the Holy Spirit and ask to see the situation differently. We have dissociated ourselves from the power of choice in our minds. We simply have been reacting to circumstances. **"In order to heal, it thus becomes essential for the teacher of God to let all his own mistakes be corrected. If he senses even the faintest hint of irritation**

in himself as he responds to anyone, let him instantly realize that he has made an interpretation that is not true. Then let him turn within to his eternal Guide, and let Him judge what the response should be." (Manual for Teachers.18.4.1-3)

We become much more willing to do this work when we fully see the pain and distress our ego thought system brings to us. Then we become much more willing to surrender our way and choose the Holy Spirit's Correction. **"Heaven is chosen consciously. The choice cannot be made until alternatives are accurately seen and understood. All that is veiled in shadows must be raised to understanding, to be judged again, this time with Heaven's help. And all mistakes in judgment that the mind had made before are open to correction, as the truth dismisses them as causeless. Now are they without effects. They cannot be concealed, because their nothingness is recognized."** (W.138.9)

Our choices are what have caused us distress, but now we can choose again. That is the good news. All we need to do is to take full responsibility for our choices and the predicaments in which we find ourselves, and we will see the results of our decisions. Indeed, as this Lesson says **"God's world is happy. Those who look on it can only add their joy to it, and bless it as a cause of further joy in them."** (W.301.2.1-2) Our tears are only due to our lack of understanding. We did not realize that they were caused by our own mistaken perceptions and not by what seems to be happening to us. The Course lays out a path for the undoing and healing of all our wrong-minded perceptions, but it takes as much dedication and commitment as we can muster. It takes great willingness. Jesus invites us to lay aside our own thoughts and come with wholly empty hands unto our God; but first, we must see just how committed we are to being right about our perspectives.

Recently, we were at a silent retreat, and I was walking down a path with my partner on a beautiful warm sunny day. We walked together in silence until I increasingly became uncomfortable that he was wearing a jacket on such a warm day. I tugged on his arm and motioned for him to take it off. He did not. After a couple more tries over the course of the next half hour, I looked within and asked myself why it was important that he take off his coat? Why did I feel he needed to do that in order for me to be at peace? As I looked more deeply at my thoughts, I recognized my need to control and recognized the ego's desire to keep me from peace. The first obstacle to peace is our desire to be rid of it, strange as that might seem. On further inquiry, I found the belief I was holding in my mind that if someone loves me, they would do as I request. But Jesus shows us that to love is to allow freedom. What would it look like for me to give my partner complete freedom without any control? This thought seemed challenging to me. I asked for help from the Holy Spirit to release my belief in the value of control and to embrace freedom for myself and my brother.

As I held this thought in my mind, my partner quietly took off his coat. I looked on in amusement. As I let go of control, it allowed him to choose what he would do. This may seem like a small incident, but there are no small incidents. Behind every thought is an unexamined belief. With each situation where there is a loss of peace, we are invited to look at what we are thinking and what belief we are cherishing. Now when a desire to control comes up, I try to stay vigilant. If I want to know the love I am, I must allow freedom for my brother. Love does not control.

This is all within the context of the Section, **"What is the Second Coming,"** (W.PII.Q9) which will guide the next ten Lessons. The simple answer to this question is in the first line of this Section, which tells us, **"Christ's Second coming is merely the correction of mistakes, and the return of sanity."** (W.PII.Q9.1.1) All it does is establish what is true about us. The First

Coming was creation. The Second Coming is the undoing of what never happened, which is the separation. We are still connected to our Source.

I love the lines in this Lesson that remind us that God's world is happy, and if we are not happy, we are in a made-up world of our thoughts, interpretations, and demands. **"Those who look on it [God's world] can only add their joy to it, and bless it as a cause of further joy in them. We wept because we did not understand. But we have learned the world we saw was false, and we will look upon God's world today."** (W.301.2.2-4)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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