

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 46 **God is the Love in which I forgive.**

Sarah's Commentary:

How do you think about who God is? If you think He made this world where people suffer and die, you may wonder what kind of God would let all that happen. He cannot be perfect love and still be responsible for the condition of this world. God is not both wrathful and loving. God is only Love, and there is no separation between this God of Love and the Self we are. If we buy into the story of Adam and Eve, we buy into the concept that God banished them from paradise for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This means God set up this scenario in the first place and tested Adam and Eve to see if they would do the wrong thing. God, being God, would have known this temptation would lead to their fall, wouldn't He? Why would we trust a God as manipulative as that? A loving God would not do that.

In the book, *Disappearance of the Universe* by Gary Renard, Arten describes the situation like this:

"And so God goes on and creates Adam and then gets him a date, Eve. Life is paradise. But God gives them this one rule. Do anything you want kids, knock yourselves out, but don't you dare eat the fruit from that tree of knowledge over there. So the serpent does its thing. Eve takes a bite and tempts Adam who takes a bite.

"Now there's hell to pay. Big angry Maker kicks Adam and Eve out of paradise. He even tells Eve she's going to suffer terrible pain during childbirth just for good measure. That will teach her! But wait just a minute here. If God is God, wouldn't He be perfect? And if He is perfect, then wouldn't He know everything? Even today's parents know the surest way to get children to do something is to tell them they can't. So if God is God and He knows everything, then what has He done here?"

Even though we may not have been raised on this Biblical version, it is in our culture and constitutes part of our thinking. It is the God the ego has made. Then, we tell God Who He is and require Him to accept our version of Him. We've made Him up in our own image and insist we are right. It is the God as defined in the Bible. How can we trust a God like that? The story is symbolic of the making of the world of bodies and of the unconscious mind. In the Course, the story concludes with the statement that nowhere does it say, when Adam fell asleep, he ever woke up. This is symbolic of the mind that has fallen asleep and has not woken up as yet. But now we are on the path of awakening, and in this process, we take the small steps each day the Course prescribes, as a way to remember who we really are as spiritual beings.

We are called to look at our relationship to God and who we think He is. This Lesson affirms that God has never condemned. He is not the vengeful, punishing, and angry God we have made Him to be. He does not bring us Lessons. He does not bring us suffering for our own good. He is only Love. We don't need His forgiveness because He has never condemned, contrary to the story of Adam and Eve.

In the story of the life of C.S. Lewis, as portrayed in the movie, *Shadowlands*, he questions how a loving God would bring all the suffering into people's lives. It reflects the generally held view of God Who brings lessons and makes us suffer, for our own good and to build our character. This is really a twisted perspective of a loving God. Only our unhealed mind with all its guilt creates suffering. We are shown in this Lesson the way out. Jesus is showing us how we can learn to forgive ourselves and thus recognize, **"God is the Love with which I love myself."** (W.46.5.5) Let's look more closely at this Lesson to understand how we can apply it to our lives as part of our awakening to the truth of who we are.

In this Lesson, we are being introduced to a new way of looking at forgiveness. We see that forgiveness is not something we need from God. We only need it for ourselves. We also learn that forgiveness has nothing to do with anyone else. What we are forgiving is our own guilt that we have projected onto another. **"There is no relationship between what is real [God's Love] and what you think is real,"** (W.45.1.3) which are all the things that seem to happen to us in this world. In today's Lesson, Jesus tells us, **"Forgiveness is the great need of this world, but that is because it is a world of illusions."** (W.46.1.3) What we are doing when we forgive is releasing this world of illusions by releasing our thoughts about it. This world seems very real to us, but it is not. Its origin is our belief in sin, which will be undone through forgiveness.

If the world is not real, anything we think we have done has not happened, and anyone we think we have wronged has not been wronged. We will understand this more fully in later Lessons. Right now, we need to understand that the only one being hurt by the lack of forgiveness is ourselves. Our lack of forgiveness keeps us in chains, bound, and fearful. Forgiveness undoes all this. This Lesson says fear is what has produced all our illusions. **"Fear condemns and love forgives. Forgiveness thus undoes what fear has produced, returning the mind to the awareness of God. For this reason, forgiveness can truly be called salvation. It is the means by which illusions disappear."** (W.46.2.2-5) Forgiveness undoes fear and hate, held in our wrong-minded belief system. When the fear and hate are undone, all that remains is love. God does not save us from our sin because it never happened and is not real. The truth is we have not sinned. We have just bought into the myth of the ego that we have done something terrible and must now run away into the body and the world and hide from God. What we are saved from is the belief in sin and guilt and thus belief in the reality of this world.

How does all this apply to our view of God? In traditional religious views, God forgives our sins, which means we truly have sinned, sin is real, and thus we are guilty. If we really are guilty, there is no basis for forgiveness. God would first have to affirm our guilt as deserved and then forgive it. It would mean the world is real and God would have to save us from our sinfulness. What Jesus is telling us is sin has no reality.

We are told in the Course that the Principle of Atonement means we have never left our Source. **"The Atonement principle was in effect long before the Atonement began. The principle was love and the Atonement was an act of love. Acts were not necessary before the separation, because belief in space and time did not exist. It was only after the separation that the Atonement and the conditions necessary for its fulfilment were planned. Then a defense so splendid was needed that it could not be**

misused, although it could be refused. Refusal could not, however, turn it into a weapon of attack, which is the inherent characteristic of other defenses. The Atonement thus becomes the only defense that is not a two-edged sword. It can only heal." (T.2.II.4.2-9) (ACIM OE T.2.II.36)

We continue to be holy and innocent, still in the mind of God. In our belief, we separated from His love. We now think we have done something terribly wrong and deserve punishment. Forgiveness helps us remember we could not separate from love, and we are not guilty. To accept the Atonement is to accept the truth about ourselves. The Atonement is the Correction of our wrong-minded thinking.

"Those who forgive are thus releasing themselves from illusions, while those who withhold forgiveness are binding themselves to them. As you condemn only yourself, so do you forgive only yourself." (W.46.1.4-5) What we do in the illusion is project our guilt onto others and make them responsible for our situation. We make others responsible for what is actually in our own minds. In effect, we are not forgiving anyone outside of us, but only our own projections.

Many opportunities for forgiveness arise in our relationships with the people who we believe have done something to us. It may be people we don't like, people we actively condemn, or people who we think we love who anger us. **"Mention each one by name, and say: 'God is the Love in which I forgive you, (name)'."** (W.46.4.3-4) **"It does not matter 'how much' you have not forgiven them. You have forgiven them entirely or not at all."** (W.46.3.4-5) When we see them as separate from us and project guilt onto them, it is because we don't want to acknowledge it in ourselves. Thus, we condemn ourselves together with them by holding them responsible for our guilt.

We do this because we can't accept the burden of guilt in ourselves and do not want to take responsibility for it. We are not aware of the extent of guilt in ourselves when we project it onto others, but when we take responsibility for our projections, we put ourselves in a position where we can now see our own guilt that others mirror back to us. Without this reflection, we would not be able to see it in ourselves. Only when we release our guilt, by taking responsibility for it, can we know the truth that we are already forgiven. When our guilt is released from our own minds through forgiveness, we can know **"God is the Love in which I love myself,"** (W.46.5.5) and **"I cannot be guilty because I am a Son of God,"** (W.46.6.3) and **"I have already been forgiven."** (W.46.6.4)

When we carry anger toward someone, we are burdened with a heavy layer of guilt. Releasing this is truly a liberating thing that blesses us. We have all experienced this kind of release and the joy that comes from letting go of our anger and our hate. It is only our own self-condemnation we put on others. It is always ourselves we forgive. Everyone is a mirror who reflects what is in our minds. Through forgiveness, we take responsibility for our projections of the guilt that is in our own minds. We recognize there is no one out there.

"The purpose of the first phase of today's practice periods is to put you in a position to forgive yourself." (W.46.5.1) Today, we can take an important step in this process and remind ourselves we are releasing ourselves from the thinking of the world, from the illusion that what we experience in the world is real, and from the thoughts that keep us in hell.

We go together, you and I, either in bondage or in freedom. One brings continued aloneness, depression, anger, and sadness, and the other brings God's peace, connection, joy, and freedom.

The practice for today involves bringing our grievances, judgments, anger, frustrations, and specialness to the light of God's Love in our minds. When we are willing to bring our projections to the light of God's Love, He shines them away.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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