

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 93 Light and joy and peace abide in me.

Sarah's Commentary:

The idea given here that **"You think you are the home of evil, darkness and sin,"** (W.93.1.1) feels very dark and may not be something we consciously think is true for us. Sin is a belief that we have destroyed God so we could exist. **"You think if anyone could see the truth about you he would be repelled, recoiling from you as if from a poisonous snake."** (W.93.1.2) Clearly, this is not anything I consciously perceive about myself. I don't recognize the depth of guilt in me described in this Lesson. My image of myself does not include this although there may be a shadow in us of what we don't want to see. Jesus says we achieved our individual self through the death of God. We built our self-concept at the cost of His death because we can't exist if He does. It has to be one or the other because both can't be true.

The guilt is such a heavy burden to us, which is why we prefer instead to see it in others. We see people we describe as evil, sinful, and even deserving death. We conceal and cover up the guilt in us, but we see it instead in those we perceive to be deserving of it. We can't afford to see it in ourselves because Jesus says, **"You think that if what is true about you were revealed to you, you would be struck with horror so intense that you would rush to death by your own hand."** (W.93.1.3) He says that to continue to live after seeing this in ourselves would be impossible. This is the picture we defend against because we don't want to see the sin and guilt in our own minds. This is what we think we would recognize in ourselves if our defenses were instantly shattered.

We are invested in our separate self and cherish it. This separate self is described in the Psychotherapy Pamphlet as, **"This self he sees as being acted on, reacting to external forces as they demand, and helpless midst the power of the world."** (P.1.3.6)

We can certainly relate to that sense of powerlessness in this world of war, disease, and many forces beyond our control, whether on a world stage or in our personal lives. How do we deal with all that goes on in the world since we are certainly not happy in this powerless state? What we do is to seek out ways to be more in control, defend against what we see as attacks, and find allies who will support us. We work to build up confidence that will give us a sense of stability and power to win our war with the world. We try to achieve a measure of self-esteem. We try to gather as much power as we can to handle what the world appears to be throwing our way.

We inflate the self we think we are in order to hide our insecurity and fear and cover up the little self; but the real culprit is our belief in sin and guilt. Jesus tells us that all moods that are less than joyous come from guilt. We tend to attribute our moods to all kinds of other things going on in our lives. Jesus keeps reminding us that only the guilt in our minds is the cause of our angst, and only our grievances are the source of our problems. Therefore, the only way through this dilemma

is to go within and bring our dark thoughts to the light. This requires watching the mind and being willing to investigate what is really behind our distress.

"When your mood tells you that you have chosen wrongly, and this is so whenever you are not joyous, then *know this need not be*. In every case you have thought wrongly about some brother God created, and are perceiving images your ego makes in a darkened glass." (T.4.IV.2.2-3) (ACIM OE T.4.V.57)

"When you feel guilty, remember that the ego has indeed violated the laws of God, but *you have not*. Leave the 'sins' of the ego to me. That is what Atonement is for. But until you change your mind about those whom your ego has hurt, the Atonement cannot release you. While you feel guilty your ego is in command, because only the ego can experience guilt. *This need not be*." (T.4.IV.5.1-6) (ACIM OE T.4.V.61)

In other words, when we are less than loving to anyone in any situation, we feel guilty; but it is only the ego that can experience guilt, and we are not the ego. Basically, we made up a self-concept, and then we made up a world that supports our self-concept and seems to validate it, which gives us the illusion that we have created ourselves. However, our self-concept bears no likeness to our Christ *Self*. In fact, it is a replacement for this *Self*. **"A concept of the self is made by you. It bears no likeness to yourself at all. It is an idol, made to take the place of your reality as Son of God."** (T.31.V.2.1-3) (ACIM OE T.31.V.44)

The self-concept, which we made up along with all the thoughts and beliefs associated with it, is **"based on nothing."** (W.93.2.1) What I think I am and everything I believe about myself is simply not the truth. This is quite a statement if we really think about it. Everything we say about ourselves must, therefore, be untrue and based on nothing. Yet we tenaciously hold onto our thoughts and beliefs because they define the image we have made of ourselves, and we value and defend this image or persona. That is why Jesus is so gentle with us as we go through the undoing process. Our investment in this illusory self is very strong. As we go through the process of questioning everything about ourselves, a great deal of fear and resistance shows up. First of all, we really don't want to look at the darkness that we think may be in us; and secondly, we are even more afraid of the deep love that we have for God that lies behind the darkness.

To uproot our self-image, we really need to look honestly at the darkness that we hold in our minds. Jesus is encouraging us in this process by reminding us that we are not guilty. The only thing we have done is to hold beliefs based on nothing. **"These are beliefs so firmly fixed that it is difficult to help you see that they are based on nothing. That you have made mistakes is obvious."** (W.93.2.1-2) In other words, while he says that he knows we think we are the home of evil and darkness, it is not the truth. He knows **"That you have sought salvation in strange ways; have been deceived, deceiving and afraid of foolish fantasies and savage dreams; and have bowed down to idols made of dust."** (W.93.2.3) He knows us in our foolishness, but he also knows the truth about us! In order to accept how secure, lofty, sinless, glorious, and totally perfect our true *Self* is, he says that we must question what we think about ourselves; but we can't question what we think from our own reference point. We need to look at our darkness from his perspective, which is to look without judgment at ourselves from above the battleground. (T.23.IV) (ACIM OE T.23.V) In other words, it is to look from the perspective of the observer, which is a place of no judgment.

We do not currently share the perception Jesus has of us that we are pure and holy, and that light, joy, and peace abide in us. **"Why would you not be overjoyed to be assured that all the evil that you think you did was never done, that all your sins are nothing."** (W.93.4.1)

We are not overjoyed because we value our individual self and resist the message that, **"These thoughts are not according to God's Will."** (W.93.3.2) Only when we look at our fear and realize how much misery and suffering it has brought to our lives do we become more willing to question our self-concepts and beliefs and recognize how much we have misperceived ourselves and others and the world.

This self we think we are has no foundation. It is a character in this dream, an image that **"cannot withstand the Will of God,"** (W.93.4.2) Jesus says, **"And anything it [this image] seems to do and think means nothing. It is neither bad nor good."** (W.93.5.3-4) The end of this identity seems to us to be death, but Jesus assures us, **"it is life. You think you are destroyed, but you are saved."** (W.93.4.3-4)

Jesus tells us that whatever we think we have done has no effect because the world is illusory. We simply cannot and have not made ourselves unworthy because we have not done **"battle with the Son of God."** (W.93.5.6) We have not changed ourselves. Nothing real has happened. We have not sinned, nor have we changed who we are. **"What power can this self you made possess, when it would contradict the Will of God."** (W.93.5.9) This is a statement of the Atonement principle, which says that we absolutely do not have the power to change what we are. We can obliterate our awareness of the truth, but he tells us, **"Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God!"** (W.93.6.1) This is fact! **"Over and over this must be repeated, until it is accepted,"** (W.93.6.2) which means we must bring our misperceptions of who we are, our dark and hateful thoughts and our judgments, to the truth. It means, when we hold thoughts that are not true, we need to become willing to recognize them and bring them to the Holy Spirit. These are beliefs that we are unworthy, abandoned, bad, and ultimately guilty. The only true thing is that we are sinless. It reminds me of Miracle Principle 14, which says miracles arise from conviction. To me, this means we can stand in truth and not invest in what does not exist. Our hateful, angry, and distressing thoughts have no substance and no reality. They are truly all meaningless. They have no impact on the truth. We can dismiss them as the lies of the ego and simply refuse to listen, but we must stand on conviction for the miracle to be revealed.

We need to apply these Lessons in order to be released from the hold the ego seems to have on us because we have over-learned the ego's program. In order to experience the truth about ourselves, we need to let go of the guilt. We do this by taking responsibility for our projections and bringing them to the Holy Spirit. We have developed defenses to protect our self-image, but now we are asked to question everything we think we are and everything we believe about ourselves. I did not make myself. Any thought of what "I" made of myself must be questioned and be given over to the Holy Spirit. Light and joy and peace abide in my mind because I am part of God.

Will these affirmations change our minds about who we are? No, they are not enough. We must do the work of excavating the ego. On this journey with the Course, there can be a tendency to take on a "spiritual ego" or self-image that denies the darkness in the mind. It comes from an intellectual understanding of the Course where we have not yet done the work of undoing the guilt. What we must recognize is the importance of undoing the ego, rather than trying to make a better, nicer, or more spiritual ego.

Real change will only come when we do the work of releasing the false self. To do the work of releasing the blocks to the awareness of the truth requires going through the darkness. There is no way around this. For me, it has been important to learn how this was all set up, how there is no world, and how much I am loved. This has allowed me to look at the darkness in my mind while recognizing it is not who I am. Thus, I have been able to become more honest with myself in the

realization that the guilt is not mine and does not belong to me. The only truth is that we are the Christ Self and not what we have made of ourselves.

When I was identifying myself totally with the ego, trying to keep my image intact, raising my self-esteem, and focusing on my best interests as I defined them, I wasn't even aware that there was any other option available to me. I did not conceive of a Self beyond this persona that I valued. I didn't know there was a choice to be made. Becoming aware of this choice is the source of our power. It takes courage and great honesty to look at our dark thoughts and take responsibility for them. Reminding myself of the truth of who I really am gives me the courage to look at the dark thoughts, knowing they are not mine. Jesus keeps reminding us that there is a Self apart from the ego, and it is what we are. While affirmations won't change our ego identity because the ego won't be shouted down, they are helpful in reminding us of the truth.

When we are told of our perfection, we may argue and resist the idea and raise arguments to disprove it. The deeper reason for this is because this idea threatens our existence as we see it or as we have made it. If we really accepted the truth about ourselves, it would terrify us because it would turn our world upside down and uproot our frame of reference. It is frightening to think we have been so totally mistaken about ourselves that we don't even know who we are. Our identity in the world has been formed by taking in perceptions of what others think of us. The voices of our parents, teachers, friends, and others have all contributed to making up the image we have adopted. It is terrifying to realize, ***"I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself."*** (T.31.V.17.7) (ACIM OE T.31.V.60)

Today, let us focus on opening to the immensity of **"the unity of your one Self. Try to appreciate Its Holiness and the love from which It was created."** (W.93.9.3-4) We are asked to **"Try not to interfere with the Self which God created as you, by hiding Its majesty behind the tiny idols of evil and sinfulness you have made to replace It."** (W.93.9.5)

"Humility will never ask that you remain content with littleness. But it does require that you be not content with less than greatness that comes not of you." (T.18.IV.3.1-2) (ACIM OE T.18.V.34)

When we project our guilt onto our brothers, we are saying they took our peace away and thus they are the guilty ones. By doing this, we are hanging onto the belief that we are innocent and others have the power to influence our state of mind. On a deeper level, outside of our awareness, by holding others as the guilty ones, we are making a bargain with God so that He will punish them instead of us. In other words, they are the perpetrators, and we are their victims. It is a false innocence that we are attempting to buy for ourselves at the expense of others. It is easy to do when we look at the atrocities committed in the world. Jesus is helping us to see that there is no need to pretend we are faultless by seeing others guilty. The fact is, we are already innocent. Why not just look at our own darkness instead of projecting it? Why not take responsibility for it so we can know our true innocence and not the innocence we bought at our brothers' expense? Now we can loosen our hold on insisting we are right about our perceptions. When we admit we have been wrong, it is the beginning of real learning.

What does it tell me if I find I am not using the first five minutes of every hour to remind myself of the truth? Why would I not be willing? Jesus expects that we will not completely trust the truth he is teaching and will probably actively resist it. Our resistance shows up in other priorities in our day that seem more important to us than focusing on the Lesson. We believe that what we are

doing in this world of form is real and essential and more important than our spiritual work. We are invested in preserving and protecting our uniqueness and specialness. This is our fear of the truth. We can now choose to give all of thoughts, fears, and concerns, as well as any resistance, to the Holy Spirit and recognize their nothingness. We can increasingly recognize that there is no need for guilt. We are also asked to respond to any disturbances today by quickly dispelling them with this thought: **"Light and joy and peace abide in me. My sinlessness is guaranteed by God."** (W.93.10.4-5)

Apply these ideas every time you are upset or disturbed about anything today. Apply this thought to anyone you might be tempted to be angry with by saying silently to them: **"Light and joy and peace abide in you. Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God."** (W.93.11.3-4)

Jesus is reminding us that extending love and joining with our brothers are the ways we learn who we are, heal our minds, and hear the Voice for God. On the other hand, every time we attack anyone, we are hiding our light, peace, and joy, and our attack then comes back to hurt us. That is why we are being given all these thoughts so we can incorporate them into a way of being in the world where we are given many opportunities to apply these thoughts daily. We are all worth this effort, which is given us to reprogram the software of the ego thought system to another way of thinking and being.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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