



LESSON 163

There is no death. The Son of God is free.

Sarah's Commentary:

The whole teaching on death in the Course is fascinating because, as the Manual for Teachers lays out in Section 27, "**Death is the central dream from which all illusions stem.**" (M.27.1.1) Thus, it is the final judgment of the ego against God. It says that our bodily reality is what is real, and if the body is what is real, God's reality cannot be true. Thus, death is held up as the proof that our reality as eternal beings cannot be true.

Death, according to the ego, is what God extracts from us for our sin of separation. Death provides evidence that the ego is right after all, and thus it says that we cannot possibly be the eternal spirit that Jesus says we are. This Lesson provides the framework for how we currently think about death and offers us a very logical process for looking at it in a new way. To begin with, we are told that death is an illusion because the ego has no power over life. God is the Creator of life, and Jesus tells us that life is all there is. "**Nothing can be apart from Him and live.**" (W.156.2.9) We live because we can't be apart from Him. There is only life and it never ends. We don't live many lives, but only experience many dream states as part of this one life we share with God.

The purpose of the ego is to defeat God, and death seems to be its ultimate weapon, which it uses to try to convince us it is the only thing we can be certain about. If death is true, it would have to mean the body is real and our experience in the body is what life is.

Jesus starts out by saying, "**Death is a thought that takes many forms, often unrecognized.**" (W.163.1.1) Certainly, when we read of the forms of death talked about here, (sadness, fear, anxiety, doubt, anger, faithlessness, lack of trust, concern for bodies, and envy), it is not what we think as death. When we think of death, we think it is about bodies that die, but Jesus says that death includes a long list of experiences that tempt us to be something we are not. The temptation, of course, is to think we are bodies experiencing a wide range of emotions. Each time we choose a thought of death, we choose a state of mind that confirms that we are something we are not.

"Temptation has one lesson it would teach, in all its forms, wherever it occurs. It would persuade the holy Son of God he is a body, born in what must die, unable to escape its frailty, and bound by what it orders him to feel. It sets the limits on what he can do; its power is the only strength he has; his grasp cannot exceed its tiny reach." (T.31.VIII.1.1-3) (ACIM OE T.31.VIII.83) These forms of death seem to make sin, guilt, and fear real because they originate with the belief in separation from God and thus our separation from the Self as created by Him.

If we are unlimited, eternal beings of peace, innocence, and joy, certainly, states of fear, anxiety, doubt, anger, envy, lack of trust, and ". . . **all forms in which the wish to be as you are not**

may come to tempt you," (W.163.1.2) can't be real. When we think of these forms of death as real, death of the body seems to be a release from the concerns of this world. Thus, we associate peace with death and trust in its inevitability. Everything else we experience in this world seems uncertain, except for our belief in the certainty of death. It is certainly a powerful symbol of the belief in the reality of the body. Yet Jesus says that our reality is unlimited life, which does not start with birth nor end in death.

When we chose to listen to the ego, we chose the thought system of sin, guilt, and fear. In other words, we escaped into the body and made the world as a place to hide from what the ego has told us is our terrible deed of having left God; now we fear His retribution. None of this is true, but we have bought into the story that the ego made up. We escaped into the body and the world, where we believed we could be safe from God, and thus we maintain our independent will and our specialness as a separate, unique self. The ego has convinced us that we have stolen our lives from God, that what we are is a body, and that the ultimate end is death. It now seems to us that, because we could destroy life, we have made death real and have, therefore, become more powerful than God. He says that we are eternal, but through death, we prove Him wrong, which gives the ego power over life. If death were real, the ego thought system would have to be right. And of course, since we identify with the ego, we believe in the reality and certainty of death. Now we are asked to question this belief.

Death is very apparent in this world. We see it everywhere. It is an experience that has touched all of us. We read about the many tragedies ending in death, and we experience the loss associated with the death of loved ones. We may fear our own impending death or the death of our family members, friends, and others close to us. Thus, it shows up with certainty in the world and so, to us, it does seem very real and something we expect and rely on, **"For it alone will surely come."** (W.163.2.4) Everything else seems less certain to us, yet this we can all count on. **"All things but death are seen to be unsure, too quickly lost however hard to gain, uncertain in their outcome, apt to fail the hopes they once engendered, and to leave the taste of dust and ashes in their wake, in place of aspirations and of dreams."** (W.163.3.1)

Everything else in the world comes and goes, yet death seems to be a constant. All our relationships, dreams, and aspirations, while initially exciting and offering lots of promise, will be lost in this battle with the inevitability of death. Nothing can outlast death. No wonder we hold it in such awe or worship it. Nothing has the power over us that death has. Nothing brings up more fear in us. Even if we believe in life after death, we still think death is real. Yet the truth is that what we really are is totally unaffected by birth or death. We are still as we were created, and nothing we have come to believe can change our reality. **"There is one life, and that I share with God."** (W.167)

We try to find ways to think of death that will reconcile our relationship with God with thoughts like, "It is God's Will," and we talk of the mystery of death and of God as the giver of release. In the case of suicide, we see it as an escape from the insanity of this world. And with it all, we see death as having the final power, always in control. It takes us hostage, and we are all its captives. **"It will never fail to take all life as hostage to itself."** (W.163.3.4) We all depend on the thought system of the ego that proves its reality to us by showing us that death is real. And each time we accept the reality of death, we think, once again, that the ego is right, and God is wrong.

Where is God? He certainly does not seem as apparent as does death. We see and experience death in a seemingly concrete form and as a constant experience, whereas God seems distant, illusory, and uncertain. Where is the evidence of Him? How do we know of His existence? Jesus says, in

our perception, death takes the place of God, and it is to death that we bow down. **"Here is the opposite of God proclaimed as lord of all creation, stronger than God's Will for life, the endlessness of love and Heaven's perfect, changeless constancy. Here is the Will of Father and of Son defeated finally, and laid to rest beneath the headstone death has placed upon the body of the holy Son of God."** (W.163. 4.3-4) And with each death, we see the witness to God's defeat. Yet we are the ones who have given power to death because we chose to worship this **"idol made of dust."** (W.163.4.2) And an idol is just a substitute for God, which is what we have made of the body. It makes death seem stronger than God's Will for life. Thus, God has been declared dead because death has overcome life. To worship death is to worship the ego and see it as having defeated God.

"Here lies a witness God is dead" (W.163.5.3) is the epitaph we write again and again with each death we witness. And don't we all agree, as we kneel down and **". . . whisper fearfully that it is so."** (W.163.5.4) We worship this god that has been made by the ego. Each one becomes a witness to the power of death that seems to overpower God and declare the imperfection of Heaven and Love; and it seems we all agree. Even though we may profess a belief in God, our deeper belief is reflected in His defeat as evidenced by our investment in the reality of the body. When we accept that life is all there is, then death, in all its forms, must be a contradiction. What is true? Is there life or is there death? Unless life is proven not to be true, death cannot be, **"For death is total."** (W.163.6.2) No compromise can be possible. **"Either all things die, or else they live and cannot die."** (W.163.6.3) **"The idea of the death of God is so preposterous that even the insane have difficulty believing it."** (W.163.7.1)

Thus, even though we all share this insanity because we believe in the reality of the body, the idea of a dead God does seem preposterous. The idea there is something that can actually kill God suggests that there once was a God, but now His life has been put out. How could that ever be possible? **"For it implies that God was once alive and somehow perished; killed, apparently, by those who did not want Him to survive."** (W.163.7.2) How does the all powerful and omniscient get obliterated? Is there really a will stronger than God's? Is death the defeat of God? It is our own arrogance that accepts that we are more powerful than God and have obliterated Him. And now it seems we are God. What is true? Is it life, or is it death? Clearly, it can't be both. No compromise is possible here. Where do we stand? Regardless of the answer to this question for each of us, Jesus nevertheless assures us that the myth told by the ego in the story of our seeming separation from God could not happen in truth.

The only thing that has happened is that we have become lost in the dream and thus lost awareness of the truth of who we are as eternal beings. God can't be defeated. Jesus says that even the insane have difficulty believing there is a force that can kill God. We can be released from this cult of death by giving up the false beliefs we hold about ourselves.

Jesus provides us with his clear logic to help set us free from the power of our belief in death. He asks us to question our fear of death by helping us see that it is illusion, and no illusion can be frightening. We are eternal beings. If God did not make death, it must all be unreal—all just an illusory belief we hold. **"There is no death, and we renounce it now in every form, for their salvation and our own as well."** (W.163.8.5) And when we take this stand today by choosing against the ego, we demonstrate the unreality of death. We see past death to life beyond. The Holy Spirit is our Guide to life inviting us to bring our fearful thoughts to Him.

God did not make death, and He did not make the body; neither did He make any of the forms of death based on our belief in sin, guilt, and fear. We are not what we think we are. We are not bodies, and we cannot die. There is only life. The only reality is joy, peace, love, and unlimited

Self. Today we reflect on the Oneness of His love, and we do so by recognizing that separation is an illusion and does not exist. No one is separate from us. No one's interests are separate from our own. Belief in illusion can be undone because it is belief in nothing real. **"He [Jesus], offered you a final demonstration that it is impossible to kill God's Son; nor can his life in any way be changed by sin and evil, malice, fear or death."** (Clarification of Terms.5.3-5) We remain as God created us.

"Death's worshippers may be afraid. And yet, can thoughts like these be fearful? If they saw that it is only this which they believe, they would be instantly released." (W.163.8.1-3) Jesus recognizes that we fear of dying because we think death means the end of life. Yet he asks us to question these thoughts since they are all illusory. Just because we believe these thoughts does not make them true. When we look at them in light of the logic he presents, we can question the beliefs we hold and bring them to the truth.

Every time we are tempted to see anyone as separate from us and as a body, we ask our Father to bless our eyes so that instead of seeing a body, **". . .we would look upon the glorious reflection of Your Love which shines in everything."** (W.163.9.2) This Lesson offers us our first prayer said to Our Father in the workbook. Pray the prayer today and reflect on the many ways death, and all its forms, seems to have reality for you. Recognize today that any negative emotion, any state of illness or frailty, lack of trust, anxiety, or distress of any kind is just a wish to be other than what you are. To **". . .look past death, and see the life beyond"** (W.163.8.9) is not to deny that bodies die. The only thing we are asked to do is to question the interpretation we have given death. When we look at any situation with the Holy Spirit, He gives us an interpretation of death that negates what the ego tells us. He reminds us that death is not the truth because God did not make it.

As I was writing this, a call came in that one of our mighty companions on this journey has just been moved to a hospice and is in her final days. Unbelievably, just as I hung up the phone, another friend called to report a death. I recognize I am being given an opportunity to heal my own beliefs in death in the face of the sadness I feel about the seeming impending death of my friends. Tomas Vieira had asked us constantly, as he was approaching his death, to forgive ourselves for our misperception of his condition. He said that if we saw him as sick, we were not perceiving correctly. Today, we are called to challenge our misperceptions, to look at our fears, and to bring them to the Holy Spirit for His Correction.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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