



LESSON 68

Love holds no grievances.

Sarah's Commentary:

Our natural inheritance, given us in our creation by Love Itself, is love. Yesterday's Lesson affirmed that we have all the characteristics of our Creator. Therefore, Kindness created me kind, Holiness created me holy, Joy created me joyful. Yet we also know that our concepts about ourselves because of our choice for the ego keep us from being aware and truly accepting the Self as we were created. We actually have forgotten who we are. We have seemingly split ourselves off from kindness, holiness, and perfection as given us in our creation. We have forgotten our Source and are no longer aware of our very nature. Of course, the fact is that it is impossible for us to separate from God. We can only think we have. The separation did not actually occur except in our minds.

When we hold a grievance or a judgment, compare ourselves to others, try to gain at their expense, think we are more special, more spiritual, or more of anything, we deny our reality as love. We substitute idols for what we are. What is an idol? It is a false belief. **"An idol is a means for getting more."** (T.29.VIII.8.12) (ACIM OE T.29.IX.59) **"It does not really matter more of what; more beauty, more intelligence, more wealth, or even more affliction and more pain. But more of something is an idol for."** (T.29.VIII.8.8-9) (ACIM OE T.29.IX.59) We look to whatever we think will bring us happiness and security.

Idols are substitutes for God and instead of looking to God for fulfillment, we have chosen substitutes---the gods of sickness, depression, cruelty, fear, and death. It is hard to believe that these are the substitutes we worship. We give power to all illusory gods. And equally, we give power to the central idol in the dream of death, which is the ego itself. **"And fear, with ashen lips and sightless eyes, blinded and terrible to look upon, is lifted to the throne of love, its dying conqueror, its substitute, the savior from salvation."** (T.23.II.15.6) (ACIM OE T.23.III.33) **"This is the mad idea you have enshrined upon your altars, and which you worship."** (T.21.II.6.7) (ACIM OE T.21.III.21)

In Lesson 50, we are told, **"Your faith is placed in the most trivial and insane symbols; pills, money, 'protective' clothing, influence, prestige, being liked, knowing the 'right' people, and an endless list of forms of nothingness that you endow with magical powers."** (W.50.1.3) **"Be it a body or a thing, a place, a situation or a circumstance, an object owned or wanted, or a right demanded or achieved, it is the same."** (T.29.VIII.1.9) (ACIM OE T.29.IX.52)

The Circle of Atonement Glossary defines an idol as anything outside of us that we hope will make us complete. The thing is that we are willing slaves to these idols. In the end, anything we value is an idol in the hope that it will complete us and supply our lacks. Yet we just get more suffering because they turn against us. This is because even though they have no power on their own, we have given them power. Jesus actually describes them as toys that dance a while for us before they eventually fail us. One of those toys is our special love relationship, which is an idol that substitutes for God.

Seeing differences and holding grievances is what keeps our false self in place, so our perfection, our peace, our joy and happiness, and our sameness with everyone is hidden from awareness. We want these differences we see in everyone, so we can say to God, "Look, He is the guilty one." "Punish him for his sins." "I am innocent by comparison." "I would never do what he has done." Thus, judging our brothers and seeing differences become the condition of our lives in the false belief that we can only be innocent in God's eyes if our brothers are judged guilty. While we judge and attack them on one hand, we also look to them to meet our needs. We believe we are lacking and now must seek for love outside ourselves. Special love is another idol we turn to, hoping to fulfill our needs. When our lover no longer offers us what we want and need, the special love relationship turns to special hate.

In holy relationships, the happiness of the other is recognized as equal to our own. These are relationships in which we join for one purpose, which is for healing. Thus, we see every relationship as an assignment whose purpose is forgiveness and healing. In our special relationships grievances are part of the ego's plan to maintain our separate identity. Special relationships are established for the purpose of gaining at someone's expense. These are relationships based on needs and lack. They are relationships that focus on differences. We see our needs as primary and expect them to be met by others. We give as little as possible to get as much as possible. These are relationships of bargaining and reciprocity all with the content of guilt.

We make others responsible for our lack of peace; but the fact is that if we don't have peace, it is because of the decision we have made to throw it away while blaming our brothers for taking it from us, and then wondering why we don't have peace. This is the craziness of ego thinking. When we are willing to take responsibility for our thoughts and really stay vigilant, we can observe them without judgment and smile gently at them. In other words, we look at our grievances and judgments while refraining from judging ourselves for having them. Instead, we release them to the Holy Spirit. That is what forgiveness is all about.

By holding grievances, we are making a decision to throw away the peace that is available to us in each moment. The ego does not want to let grievances go. Keeping our brother bound to his guilt is how we exercise control in our special relationships. This is why we are reluctant to release someone from responsibility for what they have done. To the ego love comes with conditions. Our wish is not to know our Christ Self. It is our fear of love. It is why we hold grievances because they keep us bound to the body. **"To hold a grievance is to see yourself as a body."** (W.68.1.3)

The body is a symbol of separation which gives us a specific target for our grievances and attacks. Yet the truth is that nothing that anyone does can have any effect or injure our perfection in any way. We are Spirit. Can Spirit be insulted? Only our own thoughts can hurt us. It is only our own interpretations of the behavior of others that can hurt us. We never get upset at a fact, only at our own interpretations. Grievances start and end in our own minds. There is no one who can betray or victimize us when we release thoughts of betrayal and victimization. So, what we are forgiving is only our interpretation, not the one who seems to have betrayed and hurt us.

While it may seem that grievances are in fact quite harmless when not acted on, they have devastating consequences. When we hold grievances, we have made a decision to forget our reality. Jesus asks us to consider whether grievances really can bring about such dreadful consequences where I actually forget who I am, believe I am a body condemned to death, and asleep to my true nature? "Oh Yes!" he says emphatically. These are the consequences, and they are devastating to us because they keep us unaware of the love that we are. Unhappy, alone, and believing we have enemies makes us feel unsafe and at the mercy of the world.

"Here the deathless come to die, the all-encompassing to suffer loss, the timeless to be made the slaves of time." (T.29.VIII.6.4) (ACIM OE T.29.IX.57) Jesus inquires of us, **"Would you not be motivated to relinquish your grievances if you believed all this**

were so?" (W.68.4.1) When we see that we only hurt ourselves, we become motivated to release grievances. **"Perhaps you do not yet fully realize just what holding grievances does to your mind."** (W.68.1.5) In other words, we are not fully aware of the consequences of our attacks. When we fully realize that we hurt ourselves with each grievance we hold, this increases our willingness to let them go. That is why Jesus goes to some lengths to help us see how the ego operates and how we are kept in hell by holding attack thoughts. **"I can escape the world I see by giving up attack thoughts."** (W.23)

Our minds are the cause, and the world of form is the effect. The guilt that is in our wrong minds is projected onto the world and the body. When we are annoyed or irritated with someone, impatient, frustrated, or angry, the result is that we are the ones who suffer; but we can change our minds and bring our thoughts of attack and the beliefs in the mind to the Holy Spirit. Start by looking at the upset, then the feeling that accompanies it, who am I blaming, what belief is being held in the mind, and whether I want to hold onto it or let it go? Is my desire for peace stronger than my need to be right about how I see the situation?

Jesus/Holy Spirit is the symbol of healing in our minds and with His healing comes peace in the place of suffering. Why do we still choose to suffer? It seems that we are very wedded to our thoughts and beliefs. They define our uniqueness as individuals, and we are still invested in our bodies and the world. **"To hold a grievance is to see yourself as a body. To hold a grievance is to let the ego rule your mind and to condemn the body to death."** (W.68.1.3-4) Notice how the mind holds onto seemingly justified anger. We love to tell our stories of what someone has done to us and how much we have been victimized. There is resistance to letting anyone, including ourselves, out of this prison of the mind even though we suffer in the process. We have a strong investment in being right at the expense of our happiness.

Death is the ego's final victory over God and the result of holding onto the belief in separation. This is because, in our minds, the guilt that comes with separation demands punishment, and we think God is the arbitrator of that punishment. **"It is as sure that those who hold grievances will redefine God in their own image, as it is certain that God created them like Himself and defined them as part of Him."** (W.68.3.1) In other words, we think God is like us only a bigger more powerful ego. We have projected onto Him an image of who we think we are. Thus he has all the characteristics of the ego, sometimes loving and sometimes attacking. We think God brings punishment, that he has abandoned us, and his love is conditional. We project all kinds of fearful images on Him. When calamities strike we ask, "God, why did you let this happen?" When we feel alone, we ask "God why are you not there for me?" Yet we are the ones who have projected this image of God. Now we fear the God that we have made. We think He is like us---a holder of grievances. **"It makes you believe that He is like what you think you have become, for no one can conceive of his Creator as unlike himself."** (W.68.1.7)

When we dream of revenge on those we believe have wronged us in any way, our minds actually take on more guilt. Now we fear retaliation from the world that we think is like we are. This cycle of attack and revenge puts us in a cycle of fear and defensiveness, which is a painful mental state that we all know so well. Some obsess about the past events of their lives for years and years. To do so is to take the poison of anger and attack into our own minds but hope that it is the other person who will die. Yet these thoughts are killing us! Why? They are killing us because we blot out awareness of the beauty of who we are. We cover it over with dark thoughts of anger and revenge. **"For he who holds grievances denies he was created by love, and his Creator has become fearful to him in his dream of hate."** (W.68.2.4) It is my dream. I am the one dreaming it. I am the one that can choose to awaken from this dream. That is all this illusion is---a dream. I brought this world with me. And I continue making it up every moment with the thoughts and beliefs that I hold.

Now we have been shown the way to heal the separation from God. It is by releasing our grievances against our brothers so we can know the truth about ourselves. Then the light and the love we are

is extended to the world through us, and in our innocence, we know we are invulnerable. We heal our relationships so that we can experience the peace, love, holiness, and innocence that we are. **"It is as sure that those who hold grievances will forget who they are, as it is certain that those who forgive will remember."** (W.68.3.3)

How do I know that I am holding a grievance? Quite simply it is how I am feeling. I am holding a grievance if I am not supremely and consistently happy and not experiencing joy and deep peace. It is apparent to me that my mind is full of grievances, which shut me off from my Self. Thus, the Self that I am seems to be asleep, while the ego self is the one that seems to be awake, being annoyed, hurt, frustrated, irritated, scared, uncertain, jealous, depressed, impatient, excited, needy, and distracted; all of which are thoughts that shut me off from my reality and make me forget who I really am. In this process, we are choosing to make something other than love real. But when we let go of attack thoughts against ourselves and others, Jesus tells us, **"If you succeed even by ever so little, there will never be a problem in motivation ever again."** (W.68.4.5)

The difficulty is when we insist on the reality of the situation as we define it. Our stubborn insistence makes it challenging to give up our grievances. What is the payoff to the ego for holding onto our way of defining reality? What do we get from holding onto our story? We get to be right about the way we set the situation up, and we want to be right. We justify why we feel like losers. We get to tell our story and affirm our victimhood. We believe we can get retribution for the injustice that we believe we have suffered. This gives us some modicum of pleasure thinking that revenge is sweet. I read about a study that showed that when one holds revenge thoughts, the same part of the brain lights up as that which comes from eating chocolate! But with it comes a terrible price we pay in guilt. We simply can't hold grievances and know ourselves, and yet that is precisely why we hold onto them. That is the ego's game—to keep us focused on the world and forget who we are.

We all have trouble with true intimacy, true love, and true friendship. We see in everyone what is in our own minds. We project our own hatred onto those we believe are to blame for our unhappiness. We think we are attacking someone specific, but "ideas leave not their source," meaning that the hatred starts in our own minds and remains there with each attack. Thus we are only attacking ourselves. The effect of these attacks is pain and misery. The ego hides this from us, telling us we can safely attack and get rid of our guilt, but if we truly knew that we were only keeping the guilt by attacking, would we not be motivated to let our attack thoughts go? The world is all a projection of what is in our minds. Everything we see and make real outside of ourselves comes from within us. It is no different than the figures in our nighttime dreams that are all manufactured from our own minds. It is a game set up by the ego that has no more validity than a video game. None of it is real except the love.

I love the quote from the Course that says, **"The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love."** (T.26.IX.6.1) (ACIM OE T.26.X.82) All our hatreds are ancient. Isn't it time we laid them down, however big or small our grievances are? We really don't know our own best interests. Everything that seems to happen can be used by the Holy Spirit to serve those interests if we will let Him in.

There is no one we don't hold some grievance against. We don't always want to admit this, especially with our special relationships. Yet if we are willing to look very honestly at ourselves, it will become apparent to us that we hold a grievance of some sort against everyone! Jesus says that not only do we hold grievances, but that we even cherish them! Today, you are asked not to dismiss grievances as minor. Everyone has, to some degree, failed to fulfill the function we have given them. Can you see how this is true? Recognize that there are no minor grievances. They all keep us from our true nature. **"Then think of the seemingly minor grievances you hold against those you like and even think you love."** (W.68.5.3)

So what do we do? We need to become very vigilant of our thoughts and not deny or dismiss them as trivial. **"It will quickly become apparent that there is no one against whom you do not cherish grievances of some sort. This has left you alone in all the universe in your perception of yourself."** (W.68.5.4-5) We are angry at everyone! Our egos have become civilized into being nice, polite, kind, and considerate, but underneath our civilized behavior are all kinds of disappointments, annoyances, irritations, unmet expectations, hurts, and jealousies, all stemming from grievances toward others. This is the shadow that we project onto others because we don't want to see it in ourselves. We prefer our nice and polite persona that the Course calls the face of innocence under which is the enraged victim. This leaves us feeling very isolated in our seemingly separated state.

It takes great willingness to let go of grievances. Am I willing to first admit my grievances so that they can be released? Are there some grievances I prefer to keep? How motivated am I really? The intent is not to feel guilty about having and holding grievances. The intent is to see the benefits of the gifts that are available to us when we choose to release them. Ultimately, the benefits are that we will feel safe and at peace. Everyone will be seen as a Friend. They are not separate but part of us, and only when we embrace them as our One Self can we know who we are. Our nature is love, and this nature must include our brothers. Love embraces all.

Some grievances are easy to find. Others look like special love, where we think we are only a little disappointed or a little sad with people some of the time, but it is all the same. We must look for the subtle shreds of hatreds with great honesty. If I hold hatred toward anyone, my image is one of self-hatred. **"Love holds no grievances. I would wake to my Self by laying all my grievances aside and wakening in Him."** (W.68.7.5-6)

Love and blessings, Sarah
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