



LESSON 210 ~ Review VI

[190] I choose the joy of God instead of pain.

Sarah's Commentary:

According to the Course, we actively choose pain when we use anything in the world to try to gain happiness. While we think we are taking a road to happiness, Jesus describes it as a road to nowhere. Yes, we might experience moments of "pleasure," but they ultimately bring pain. The Course is clear that some of what we perceive as our biggest setbacks may actually provide the biggest gains on this spiritual path. We just do not know the difference.

"What pleasures could there be that will endure? Are not the frail entitled to believe that every stolen scrap of pleasure is their righteous payment for their little lives? Their death will pay the price for all of them if they enjoy their benefits or not. The end of life must come, whatever way that life be spent. And so take pleasure in the quickly passing and ephemeral." (T27.I.7.4-8) (ACIM OE T.27.II.8) "These are not sins, but witnesses unto the strange belief that sin and death are real, and innocence and sin will end alike within the termination of the grave. If this were true, there would be reason to remain content to seek for passing joys and cherish little pleasures where you can." (T27.I.8.1-2) (ACIM OE T.27.II.9)

In other words, we feel justified in finding whatever pleasure we can in the world. We say we owe it to ourselves. We deserve it. We justify a hedonistic lifestyle with the idea that life is short and then we die, so why not eat, drink, and be merry? Whichever we choose, we will still die, yet our idea of pleasure brings more pain. This is kept hidden from our awareness, which is why it needs to be exposed. There are many references in the Course to the confusion of pleasure with pain.

"It is impossible to seek for pleasure through the body and not find pain." (T.19.IV.B.12.1) (ACIM OE T.19.V.b.71)

"While you believe that it can give you pleasure, you will also believe that it can bring you pain." (T.19.IV.A.17.11) (ACIM OE T.19.V.a.57)

"It will share the pain of all illusions, and the illusion of pleasure will be the same as pain." (T.19.IV.B.12.7) (ACIM OE T.19.b.71)

"And to convince you this is possible, it bids the body search for pain in attack upon another, calling it pleasure and offering it to you as freedom *from* attack." (T.19.IV.B.15.4) (ACIM OE T.19.IV.b.74)

"Ruled by this perception the body becomes the servant of pain, seeking it dutifully and obeying the idea that pain is pleasure." (T.19.IV.B.13.4) (ACIM OE T.19.IV.b.72)

"Think on the many offerings made for its pleasure, and remember all these were made to make seem lovely what you hate." (T.20.II.1) (ACIM OE T.20.III.5)

"What pleasures could there be that will endure?"
(T.27.I.7.4) (ACIM OE T.27.II.8)

Having said this, it is important to remember we need not feel guilty when we do choose what we think offers pleasure. It is not helpful, nor should we judge ourselves for our pursuits in the world. When we judge ourselves, the ego is in the forefront, once again, in its attempts to make us feel guilty. This Lesson is only about recognizing that the source of pleasure is not where we think it is, and, in fact, ultimately brings more pain. Thus, whatever we might wish to pursue, it is helpful to ask—what it is for? What is the purpose of this endeavor we wish to undertake?

Once I understand that **"Pain is my own idea"** (W.210.1.2) and not inflicted on me, but something I actively choose, believing it will bring pleasure, I can make another choice. This is when I recognize that my interests can only be served by doing God's Will. I change my mind about the mistaken idea that I can find happiness in the world. Those of us on this path have some glimmer of awareness that our independence, our reliance on our small self, and our seeking for pleasure in fame, recognition, money, and relationships in the world has brought us pain. Anything we seek through the body brings more pain. Today, we affirm again that our reality is not a body, and true joy comes only from staying focused on our purpose and our function of forgiveness regardless of what we are doing in the world.

It takes a lot of learning to realize that our choices in the world bring us pain. We are confused about where and how to find joy. We are so certain we know what we need and what can serve us. We believe that if we had more money, a special person in our lives, or the right job, we would know joy. We believe that our bodies can give us pleasure. We think that if we could maintain consistency in our lives with no change, we would be safe. On the other hand, we worry about the events we believe will bring us pain and try to defend against them. This is so well illustrated in the movie 'Hector and the Search for Happiness' where Hector thought that a life of daily consistency with little change was what he wanted until he discovered how miserable he was.

As we read in the Manual for Teachers **"There is a thought in particular that should be remembered throughout the day. It is a thought of pure joy, a thought of peace, a thought of limitless release, limitless because all thoughts are released within it. You think you made a place of safety for yourself. You think you made a power that can save you from all the fearful things you see in dreams. It is not so. Your safety lies not there. What you give up is merely the illusion of protecting illusions. And it is this you fear and only this. How foolish to be so afraid of nothing. Nothing at all. Your defenses will not work but you are not in danger. You have no need of them. Recognize this and they will disappear. And only then will you accept your real protection."** (M.16.6)

This Lesson is clear that pain is our own idea. It is an invention in the mind—an imaginary idea. It comes from the belief that the body and the world are real and can offer us something of value. It seems to take great learning to loosen our beliefs in this regard because we have learned to look outside ourselves for what we think will fulfill us. As Jesus reminds us, **"It takes great learning both to realize and to accept the fact that the world has nothing to give."** (Manual for Teachers.13.2.1) The decision for God is the decision to go inward so we can connect with the love

we are. The only other option is to keep seeking for love where it can't be found. There are not two alternatives to choose between, but only one real alternative, which is to connect with the peace within us. To look elsewhere is to find nothing at all.

Anything I think I want in this world is my own idea, apart from God. I seek and seek for happiness where it does not exist. It is the ego's mantra. **"Seek but do not find remains this world's stern decree, and no one who pursues the world's goals can do otherwise."** (M.13.5.8) This keeps us on the merry-go-round of this world and completely distracted from the true joy that God offers, which is found in our relationships with our brothers and in the quiet within the mind. We have taught ourselves that we are separate from each other and from God and that we must figure our own way through this world. Jesus teaches that when we rely on the ego as our guide, we experience pain. When we turn to the Holy Spirit and ask with humility to see everything differently, we are turning to guidance that takes us off the daily merry-go-round of our lives. It takes great desire, willingness, and radical self-honesty to move in a new direction. **"Trust not your good intentions. They are not enough. But trust implicitly your willingness, whatever else may enter."** (T.18.IV.1-3) (ACIM OE T.18.V.33)

We are now halfway through our Review Lessons, and I just want to reinforce the importance of the central idea, **"I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me."** Lessons 94, 110, 162 and 199 all repeat the same thought. There is great importance put on the idea that God, as our Cause, has the only power over our identity. Everything we think we have done, or seem to have done, has had no real effect. None of it can, or has, changed the truth of who we are. We think we have the power to affect what we are, but we are being liberated from this false idea, as we apply the Lessons. We are not enslaved by our bodies or their evil deeds, nor are we prisoners to the body's instincts, vulnerabilities, infirmities, or illnesses. Jesus really wants us to get this so we can be free of all the limitations of the body. He wants us to recognize that our reality is outside the body. We immerse ourselves in these reviews so that our current way of thinking can be undone. When we approach the practice with investment, willingness, and sincerity, we receive the gifts of grace.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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