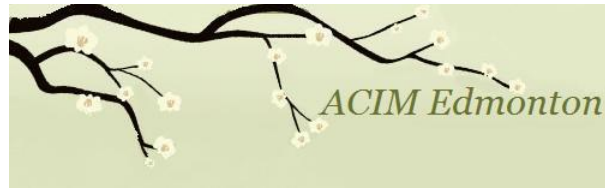


ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 57 ~ REVIEW I [Review Lessons 31-35]

Sarah's Commentary:

The Lessons are all about staying vigilant with our experiences throughout the day and discerning which teacher we are choosing in each moment—the ego or the Holy Spirit. Everything we experience is coming from our own minds. There is nothing outside of our minds. The themes that run through these Review Lessons are mostly about the peace that abides deep within us and the freedom available to us to leave our self-imposed prison. In the introduction to the review, Jesus said, **"We are now emphasizing the relationships among the first fifty of the ideas we have covered, and the cohesiveness of the thought system to which they are leading you."** (W.PI.RI.IN.6.4)

We see a lot in this review about the prison we find ourselves in, though it is of our own imagining. How can anything imprison the Son of God? We are only in a prison of our own thoughts. The truth is that we are free right now. The door is open, and **"I can leave simply by walking out."** (W.57.1.6) As long as we don't believe that and hold onto our **"insane wishes,"** (W.57.1.9) we stay in the prison. The prison is one we have made up, and yet the Lesson reminds us, **"Nothing holds me in this world."** (W.57.1.7) In spite of this fact, we feel trapped! We resent our perceived incarceration because we see others as responsible for our condition. Jesus says the prison door is open, and we can walk into the sunlight any time we choose.

I notice how much I feel the victim of demands that seem to be part of my day, yet I wonder, who but myself has set it all up? It is an ironic image. **"Should I wait in chains which have been severed for release, when God is offering me freedom now?"** (W.279.1.5) **"Prisoners bound with heavy chains for years, starved and emaciated, weak and exhausted, and with eyes so long cast down in darkness they remember not the light, do not leap up in joy the instant they are made free. It takes a while for them to understand what freedom is. You groped but feebly in the dust and found your brother's hand, uncertain whether to let it go or to take hold on life so long forgotten. Strengthen your hold and raise your eyes unto your strong companion, in whom the meaning of your freedom lies. He seemed to be crucified beside you. And yet his holiness remained untouched and perfect, and with him beside you, you shall this day enter with him to Paradise, and know the peace of God."** (T.20.III.9.1-6) (ACIM OE T.20.IV.25) This is what Heaven is. It is union. It is joining with your brother. It is equality. It is recognizing our interests are exactly the same; and when we do, the prison doors are opened. The imprisonment we experience in our aloneness and sense of separateness from each other and from God is seen to be illusory.

When I am experiencing difficulty with someone, I am identifying him/her as the problem and as the cause of my lack of peace, but I can choose to change my mind. I can choose to see it is *my* guilt I am projecting on my brother. I can choose to see his innocence. I can offer my brother peace

and forgiveness instead of judgment if I am willing to take responsibility for my own thoughts as the cause of everything I see. That is the only way I will know my own innocence. As I release you to the Holy Spirit in peace, I release myself as well. The question we need to ask ourselves is---do we really want to? The ego screams, "No. He must pay." "My anger is justified". "Look at what he has done." But what happens when we hold these perspectives and listen to the voice of the ego is that we put ourselves in the prison with him. It may not feel like an easy choice to take his hand instead of crucifying him when our anger seems so justified; but it is the only choice we must make if we want freedom and peace for ourselves. It is the decision as to which teacher we will follow, the ego or the Holy Spirit. The only freedom we have in the world is the power of decision to choose which direction we will go.

The world only has one purpose. It is indeed ". . . **really a place where he [we] can be set free.**" (W.57.3.5) As Eckhart Tolle asks in his book, *A New Earth*, "Can they defy the gravitational pull of materialism and materiality and rise above identification with form that keeps the ego in place and condemns them to imprisonment within their own personality?" It is all about our attachments to form, whether it be to our special relationships, our reputation, our material attachments, or to the body. Transformation takes place as we rise above identification with the world of form and transition into the sunlight where everything shines with God's meaning. "**My mind is part of God's. I am very holy.**" (W.57.5.1-2) Yes, we can procrastinate, and we do resist, but the way out will eventually be chosen by us all. That is why we came. We came to experience separation, but now we can find liberation if we choose. That is what the new earth is all about.

I have invented the world I see as a result of what is in my mind. If am not happy and not at peace, I am the only one that can change my condition. If I want to know my own holiness, I have to see it in you. The ego says, "Look at yourself." "You are a victim!" "You have been hurt!" "Look at what this person has done to you!" We can choose not to listen. We can choose to see an opportunity for healing in anything that shows up. Otherwise, we get into a cycle of attack and retaliation, and instead of releasing our guilt, we enhance it and stay in the prison. We chain ourselves to those we hate. Are you at peace today? If not, you are listening to the ego as your guide. The only right use of judgment is "how do you feel?" "**Watch your mind carefully for any beliefs that hinder its accomplishment, and step away from them. Judge how well you have done this by your own feelings, for this is the one right use of judgment. Judgment, like any other defense, can be used to attack or protect; to hurt or to heal. The ego should be brought to judgment and found wanting there. Without your own allegiance, protection and love, the ego cannot exist. Let it be judged truly and you must withdraw allegiance, protection and love from it.**" (T.4.IV.8.) (ACIM OE T.4.V.64)

This is truly a moment-by-moment decision as to whether you choose a prison of your own making or choose your release. Jesus urges us, "**Beware of the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated. In this view, you seek to find an innocence that is not theirs but yours alone, and at the cost of someone else's guilt. Can innocence be purchased by giving of your guilt to someone else?**" (T.26.X.4.1-3) (ACIM OE T.26.XI.88) Whenever you are not at peace today, look at your thoughts and admit you are choosing to hold grievances and attack thoughts, believing that this is how you can purchase false innocence by making a brother guilty for what you perceive he has done. Remember that you do have a choice and can let your grievances go. Clearly, we struggle with this. It is not easy for us when we identify with the victim stance and believe we are unfairly treated. The ego is tenacious, but we have a bigger power in us than the ego. The ego has no power when we withdraw our belief from it. And when we do, we put

ourselves under the laws of God instead of our own rules that we made up for how the world is supposed to treat us. We then withdraw the demands we make of anyone.

Despite appearances of war and conflict, peace always shines behind every attack. It abides in all hearts. Help me to see this peace behind every attack. Help me to focus not on what my eyes see, but to look beyond the form to the truth that shines in everyone. Yes, the forms we see all around us may still be clashing. There will still be war. There is still conflict in the world. Yet with forgiveness, we see witnesses to the light behind the clashing forms; this affirms that with vision, we can see the holiness and innocence that is not seen with the body's eyes. **"I see everything upside down, and my thoughts are the opposite of truth."** (W.57.3.3)

It is only through forgiveness that holiness is revealed. When the blocks are gone we see a world of peace, forgiveness, and love shining back at us. Why would we not want that? What do grievances offer that we would want more than that? Until we choose the means to a different world—the real world, we won't be aware of the light in us. It is in allowing the light in me to shine that I begin to understand it is coming from deep within me and reflected back to me in gratitude. The illusions I hold in the form of concepts, beliefs, rules, expectations, anger, depression, fantasies, desires, worries, and concerns, keep me from recognizing, **"My mind is part of God's. I am very holy."** (W.35) I truly am holy, divine, pure, and innocent. That is the only truth. **"As I share the peace of the world with my brothers, I begin to understand that this peace comes from deep within myself."** (W.57.5.3)

Today, I ask myself, "How can I be the victim of a world that can be completely undone if I so choose? If it truly is a world I made, the world is not the problem. The only problem is the fact that I am not willing to consider that I made it, and see in it my projections. Am I willing to admit I have been wrong about everything, thinking I am a victim of everything and everyone, including my own body? We made up everything we think impinges on us. Now we need to have the humility to admit we have been wrong. Our stubborn insistence that we are right is the problem. The way out is to admit we are wrong, release our grievances, and join with Jesus to let his light shine away the darkness we are holding in our minds. Unloving thoughts remain only as a result of our decision not to look at them.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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