

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 261 God is my refuge and security.

Sarah's Commentary:

Now we are onto a new question, which explains, "**The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built, to separate parts of his Self from other parts.**" (W.PII.Q5.1.1) We think our reality is that of a body. Jesus describes the body as a fence. Within this "fence," we think we live only to die and decay. He says that the fence surrounds a great and glorious idea of our reality. "**The body cannot know. And while you limit your awareness to its tiny senses, you will not see the grandeur that surrounds you.**" (T.18.VIII.2.1-2) (ACIM OE T.18.IX.72)

It is the identification with the body that keeps us safe from love. "**It is only the awareness of the body that makes love seem limited. For the body is a limit on love. The belief in limited love was its origin, and it was made to limit the unlimited.**" (T.18.VIII.1.1-3) (ACIM OE T.IX.71) And this is what we want. Really? This seems like a strange idea, as everyone in the world seems to be constantly seeking for love, but Jesus says that while we think it is love we are seeking, we are actually keeping love out.

When we look at all the psychological and physical defenses we put up against being hurt and feeling vulnerable, we can indeed see how we try to keep ourselves safe from love. Real love can have no fear attached to it and needs no defense. What are we protecting ourselves from with our defenses except love? Our fear of love is our fear of losing the seemingly protective boundaries we put around ourselves. We protest that we do not fear love, but are in search of it. Yet to keep our individuality and specialness, we also keep our defenses and our control.

The ego does not know what love is, but it does sense that it has an enemy. It is the Son of God, the decision-maker, that it fears for it knows we can choose against the ego and end its reign over us. That is why the ego has devised a plan to keep itself safe. It keeps us from knowing that we have a choice for something other than the ego. When we don't know we have a choice available to us in the mind, we side with the wrong-mind—the home of the ego, as it is all that is in our awareness and with it comes the belief in the reality of the body. The belief that we are bodies and personalities different from everyone else and living in this world, is thus never deeply questioned.

Now we are called to put this belief to question. What if we are wrong about our reality? What if our reality is not the body at all? Our identification with the body is kept intact as long as we continue to identify with the ego thought system of separation. When we chose to run away from God's Love and accepted the thought system of the ego, we forgot we are the Son of God. The thought system of sin and guilt, accepted into the mind, was so horrendous that we left the mind. This mindlessness keeps us safe from God's Love because it means we can't make another choice as long as we don't know we have a decision-making mind. Now we seem to live in separate bodies, separate from each other, each contained within this fence, with space between us, where we no

longer see Oneness but only separate parts. **"Minds are joined; bodies are not."** (T.18.VI.3.1) (ACIM OE T.18.VII.51) That is why bodies were made. They were made not to join. Only minds can join.

Why would we choose safety from God in a body when the body is going to die? Why would we turn to the body for our safety when it is such a fragile, impermanent organism? We do this because it provides us with daily proof we are what we say we are, that death is real, and that God is dead. It demonstrates that the ego's strategy has succeeded, and that God does not exist. It tells us that only the separated self we think we are is real and that God is the illusion. The world seems real and solid, and God is just a myth. The impermanence of the body proves that the strategy of the ego works. It establishes that separation is a fact, death is real, and God cannot exist because there cannot be both separation and Oneness. It is one or the other.

What is the truth? Is the truth duality or Oneness? If Oneness is the truth, there can be no victim or victimizer. There is no one to attack or be attacked. There is just One Mind. Yet in that scenario, we don't exist. Thus, if our existence as individuals is a reality, it can only be true if God and Oneness have been annihilated, which is exactly what the ego says has happened. Because the ego story is that we have destroyed God so we could have a separate existence, it offers us an escape into the body and into the world where we can be safe from God and thus safe from His Love. Even more important, it is a place where we believe we can be safe from the punishment we think is coming to us because of our perceived attack on God.

Of course, none of this is in our awareness, but the thought system we hold is that attack has offered us what we want, which is our emancipation from God. Now we see value in attack because we got what we wanted through our attack on God. We became the victimizer, but we also saw value in being a victim. As a victim, we refuse to take responsibility for what we have done. We say it is God Who abandoned us. The thought system of attack and defense is now held in the mind and played out in the world. It is a world of "one or the other." It is a world where we try to gain at another's expense. It is a world of bargaining where we try to get for ourselves what we think we need. It is a world of winners and losers.

We strategize, bargain, and manipulate to get what we want. This is the basis of our special relationships. These are the relationships bound by anger because we believe sacrifice is required to get what we want. **"It is impossible for the ego to enter into any relationship without anger for the ego believes that anger makes friends."** (T.15.VII.2.3) (ACIM OE T.15.VIII.66) They are relationships of reciprocity. **"The ego establishes relationships only to get something. And it would keep the giver bound to itself through guilt."** (T.15.VII.2.1-2) (ACIM OE T.15.VIII.65) We try to give as little as we can to get as much as we can, and what we are trying to get is the love we think we lack.

Our experience of having been born into a body has obliterated from our minds the knowledge of where we came from. Now we project our own forgetting onto God, and we say God has forgotten us! The lie that the ego has told us is that God is our enemy and is pursuing us in order to punish us for our sins. We are now convinced that this is the truth. We have come to believe that we are entirely on our own. We feel a strong sense of abandonment. We simply have no memory of our home. Oh yes, we can tell stories of past lives or even of going back to the womb and our experience there, but we don't know what preceded our existence as bodies. Jesus said in the Bible, "Before Abraham was, I am." We have always been. Now with the benefit of this teaching, we are given a way to question what the ego is and what we have accepted into the mind. As long as we identify with its thought system without question, we continue in this cycle of birth and death. It is all held up by the belief we have sinned against God and are guilty. It is a pattern we relive over lifetimes, and it is also a pattern of being victimizers and victims of each other.

While we don't die when the body dies, we think we will die when it (the fence) dies because we have identified ourselves with it. We think the body is real and it is what we are. We pay a huge price because of our identification with the body. To us, it seems worth it because we want to maintain our separation, even though we suffer in our perceived aloneness. **"And if he did not die, what 'proof' is there that God's eternal Son can be destroyed?"** (W.PII.Q5.2.9) We thought we would be safe from God in the body and in the world, and we thought we could escape God's punishment for our sin; but sickness, aging, and death show us this is not at all the case. The body, where the ego assured us we would be safe, is very vulnerable. Jesus asks us to question the whole setup. How could this vulnerable body ever keep us safe, and from what do we need to be kept safe, anyway? The whole ego story can now be questioned and exposed as the lie that it is.

To put this into practice, we need to look at how our daily lives exemplify the lies of the ego and to question the false beliefs and misperceptions we hold. As we learn to observe our thoughts and beliefs without judgment, we can increasingly see that **"The body is a dream. Like other dreams it sometimes seems to picture happiness, but can quite suddenly revert to fear, where every dream is born. For only love creates in truth, and truth can never fear."** (W.PII.Q5.3.1-3)

This Lesson reminds me of the song by Resta Burnham called "Person" where the words of the song speak about the body. *"It can't see. It can't hear. It can't feel anything. It does what it's told, never raises a stink. It can't think, can't create, was not born, does not die, but we say it is "I." I'm a person. It's a wee little bundle of water and dust but feed it and clean it and clothe it we must. House it, insure it, transport it in cars. Take it out to the bars. It's a person. A body, an image, with secrets inside—a private and personal person."*

Jesus reminds us that our safety lies in God, who is **"my refuge and security."** (W.261) This is reminiscent of Psalm 46, but the focus is different. It is not about God smiting our enemies and keeping us safe in our bodies. It is about our true safety and security in our Identity, as the Christ Self, one that can never shift nor change and has nothing to do with the body. The shift away from our identity with the body to that of mind is a process that requires time. It is why time was given us.

We are increasingly being led away from the belief that we live in the body. The Course is trying to get us to disengage ourselves from our identification with this limited, fragile, and vulnerable self and to strengthen our sense of identity with the God Self by seeing that we are not separate from each other. By forgiving our misperceptions of our brothers, we increasingly see that we are the same. We share the same needs and the same purpose. Everything we experience in the world is love or a call for love. As we heal our misperceptions of each other and bring our mistaken perceptions of ourselves and others to awareness, our identification with the body, personality, and image is lessened. We are not being asked to deny our bodies, but to put them to a different purpose. Our only useful purpose here is to do the healing work. In this regard, everything in the world can serve our purpose of awakening from this dream as we go about our normal day-to-day activities. It is not about what we do in our day but the mind-set with which we do it.

I remember when I felt guided to go to Sedona to do a year of study and contemplation of the Course. Driving by myself across the desert in the dead of night, I had a moment of overwhelming fear and wondered what the hell I was doing, putting myself at potential risk. There were hardly any cars on that part of the road, and I felt a momentary panic as I thought of what would happen if my car broke down. This thought was followed by a bigger realization that I was truly safe and protected. There was nothing to fear. God truly is my refuge and security. The only safety I truly have is with Him. Further, I felt so strongly guided to go to Sedona and everything had fallen so

beautifully into place that I felt this journey was in His Hands. When I experience fear, I engage in self-talk where I remind myself of the truth. When I took this trip some years ago, my focus was still very much on the safety of my body. But the truth is we are eternal beings, and no matter what the condition of the body, it is still not who we are. We are eternally safe.

What does the Lesson mean when it says, "**Let me today seek not security in danger**"? (W.261.1.3) How do we try to find safety in danger? Think about the ways we try to feel safe and secure in the world. There are many things we look to for our protection, safety, and security, including the food we eat, clothes we buy, money, car, house, insurance, friends, and whatever we surround ourselves with. Our psychological defenses are also made for this purpose.

When we look to the world for security, it gives us an illusion of safety, but the world is a place of fear as it is made from fear. There can be no security here because there is nothing permanent and consistent that we can completely rely on. We also seek for security in the body, which is constantly in danger. How quickly the body can be hurt or die; we know it just takes an instant. It is hardly a place of refuge or security! We spend a lot of energy, putting up physical and psychological defenses to keep ourselves from being hurt. We are constantly trying to stay safe. Over and over, we see that our investment in our bodies for protection does not work.

When we read of our attempt to find "**peace in murderous attack**," (W.261.1.3) we can see how this too is played out in the world, where wars are fought to preserve and protect the peace. When we look around, we can see this does not work, neither on the world stage nor in our own lives. Attack will never result in peace. War will never bring peace. To identify ourselves with the body and the world is to identify with the ephemeral and the non-peaceful.

I am inspired when I read of those who have learned this Lesson in the condition of their lives. This was the case of Terry Anderson some years ago when he was abducted in Beirut and held hostage for close to seven years by a group of Hezbollah Shiite Muslims, who were supported by Iran. His request for a Bible was granted him and with the reading of the Bible, slowly the chains were removed from his mind, both physically and metaphorically. During this time, he kept praying for his release and for his safety, but he had a realization that this was not the right prayer. It was when he started praying for understanding, for strength and for grace that he was able to see his captors as himself, and soon after, he was released. I have been equally inspired by my reading of Peace Pilgrim and of others like her, who have become an example of the power of forgiveness, which results in complete fearlessness.

Can you imagine when we truly know who we are, nothing can shake our sense of safety and security? We experience being held in God's embrace in the quiet place in each of us where we rest in God. We experience it when we trust God, calling on Him instead of turning to the ego. We know it when we no longer feel so alone and remember Who walks with us. We know it when we trust that all things work together for good. We know it when we feel bold and confident that all is well regardless of what it looks like.

Today, let us not look to idols to keep us safe. Today, we choose our reality as the Christ Self we are. We are with God right in this moment. Our bodies are quite simply no more than wind-up cosmic toys. We can withdraw our identification with them. God is our home. We rest in Him. This is where we can escape from the belief in the world and the body. See yourself above the battleground where you are safe. Watch the movie of your circumstances from the theater where Jesus is watching with you, and smile at the thought that any of this is serious. While your wind-up toy is running around doing things focused on its well-being, you are safe in God. God is your refuge and security.

Just as I was writing this, my son called to say he had a horrendous accident and was in the hospital with deep cuts to his face requiring many stitches. The news threw me into fear, worry, and concern. I rested my mind and quieted my thoughts and told myself that a healed mind would remain at peace. Since this was not completely my current state, I turned to Spirit and asked how am I to see this. I asked for His help that I may remember who he is and see him as healed and whole. I looked more deeply at my fear and chose to go deeper into the mind to uncover false beliefs that I was holding about this situation. I felt my helplessness, as he was in another city and I could not be there with him. I put him in the hands of Jesus, recognizing that he is the only healer. I reminded myself that worry is an attack thought on myself. I engaged in helpful self-talk, reminding myself that the script is written and all things work together for good. I deleted the need to understand, and then I smiled at the synchronicity of what I was writing in this commentary and how this situation was an invitation for me to put this teaching into practice in this moment and every moment.

The body can serve a holy purpose in the world. We are not asked to deny our bodies, but to put them to their proper use. The body does not change, but the purpose it serves can now be changed. Now we use it to extend the love we are and join with our brothers instead of separating from them.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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