

ACIM Edmonton - Sarah's Reflections



LESSON 248

Whatever suffers is not part of me.

Sarah's Commentary:

We believe that we have committed a dreadful sin in having separated from God, and so we had to run away from His punishment for our perceived sin. We made our escape into the body and the world where God could not enter, and we are now in competition with all other bodies, trying to get our needs met. We have bought into the deception of the ego, which gives rise to all desiring and manifesting. Yet what I see as myself is not God's creation but a false self, consisting of nothing more than long-held beliefs and concepts I hold as true. They all come from past conditioning that has not been fully investigated and questioned. Jesus asks that we bring these concepts and beliefs we hold in the mind to reason. He says that **"The introduction of reason into the ego's thought system is the beginning of its undoing, for reason and the ego are contradictory."** (T.22.III.1.1) (ACIM OE T.22.IV.29) He goes on to say that reason is the beginning of vision, which has nothing to do with the body's eyes that were made to focus our attention outside of ourselves. Who I think I am is a mistaken identity. It consists of thoughts, values, concepts, and beliefs that have not been brought to reason. When these false concepts of ourselves are released, then **"reason and the ego separate, to go their separate ways."** (T22.III.1.10) (ACIM OE T.22.IV.29)

The ego has taken up residence in our holy pristine minds. Jesus describes it as the stranger who has walked into our holy home with our full permission! **"There is a stranger in him, who wandered carelessly into the home of truth and who will wander off."** (T.20.III.7.2) (ACIM OE T.20.IV.22) We have made adjustments to its demands, but it is a cruel master. This is good news because we won't tolerate the ego when we see how it keeps us from true peace and joy. Listen to how it speaks to you, berating you for all your mistakes, crucifying you for not doing things right, and obsessively driving you to distraction with its chatter.

Yet we are the ones who give it permission to enter our minds, so we are the ones who can make it unwelcome and can ask it to leave. Until we do, this stranger seems to have a powerful hold on us because we have invested belief in it, thinking it is what we are. **"Ask not this transient stranger, 'What am I?'"** (T.20.III.7.5) (ACIM OE T.20.IV.23) The stranger does not know. What it does know is that it has an "enemy." This "enemy" threatens it because it is the one who can withdraw support and investment in it. It is the decision-making mind. We will surely choose to dismiss this stranger (the ego) when we see it is the basis for all our suffering. Jesus reminds us that faith can move mountains, but it is nothing compared to the power we have used to imprison ourselves by identifying with this stranger. We can now use this power to release the stranger, reclaim our holy home, and free the holy Self we have imprisoned.

We all want happiness, peace, and love. This desire has kept us searching, but we have been searching where peace is not to be found. We have been searching outside ourselves in the things of this world. We had hoped to find it in our special relationships, a new job, a new house, prestige,

and power in the world, or in our accomplishments. It keeps us constantly asking, "What's the next thing?" Achieving what we think we want in the world will give us temporary pleasure and moments of satisfaction, but ultimately, it all leads to suffering. We suffer because pleasure can't last, and we end up chasing more and greater pleasures until we recognize the cost to us. Pleasure seeking is what the ego would have us pursue endlessly to keep us rooted in this illusion. We seek things outside ourselves to feel complete. Because we believe we are lacking, we try to fill the sense of lack we feel with whatever we can.

The ego has an agenda, kept from our awareness, which is: **"Seek but do not find."** (T.16.V.6.5) (ACIM OE T.16.VI.48) I had so many hopes and dreams in my youth of what a happy life would look like, yet everything I tried to do ended the same way—in disillusionment. No matter what success I found, I did not feel the peace and joy I was seeking. Yes, in the eyes of the world, I had many reasons to be happy, but I never experienced the deep peace that can only come from getting in touch with the truth within. It has been such a gift to open more fully to the truth within. Oh, yes, it has been painful along the way to discovering the truth of my Self. To learn that special relationships start out beautifully but lose their luster and attractiveness, was a hard and painful lesson but it is all part of this spiritual journey. Everything has served perfectly to bring me to where we I currently am. When life brings us to our knees, or at least some level of disillusionment, we are more motivated and ready to listen to another Voice.

Difficult events and circumstances in our lives are what bring us to a place of deep inquiry and questioning about the meaning of life. In the questioning, ultimately, the answers are provided. When we think we know, we are not open to a new way of seeing. For some of us, it requires a great deal of pain to come to this place of readiness. Whatever amount of pain it takes to motivate us to reach out for help is whatever is in our script. Thus, it is all ultimately perfect. No, the ego does not see it this way, but the spirit rejoices.

Throughout this journey, the Holy Spirit is in constant communication with us, but our own voice has been drowning out the quiet Call within. Throughout this Course, we are being told again and again we are unlimited, have never sinned, and are eternal beings who cannot die. The truth about us is that we are wholly powerful and glorious. The decision-maker in the mind listens to the ego or the Holy Spirit and chooses which it will believe. When we read, **"Whatever suffers is not part of me,"** (W.248) it means that I can withdraw my belief in suffering, grief, and pain, but do I want to? It does seem like a silly question. On a conscious level I think I don't want to suffer, yet if I am suffering, there is some payoff that I am getting from the suffering. I get to be right about my belief that I truly am a victim of the world I see. I can pretend the suffering that I am experiencing comes from outside of me. I can relish the idea that I am unfairly treated and make myself right about the way I see things.

The clearest example of this for me came when my husband died, and I was feeling a lot of grief. Then at some point when the pain of grief had been lived for some time, I had the realization that the grief I was experiencing was a decision I was making, and I could choose to be done with it. I realized I could choose to be happy despite his death. I considered more deeply what Jesus tells us, that outside of this dream there is no death. Death is a mockery of God, proving Him wrong. Yes, the body can die, but who we are cannot. It was quite a revelation for me. I could withdraw my investment in sadness anytime I decided to do so. It felt very empowering to feel the attachment to my husband, to feel the loss, and yet to make a choice to be happy. When I found moments of happiness during this time, the ego would tell me that I should feel guilty about being happy. Its version of events was that if I did not mourn, it was an indication that I did not love him. Yet now I could look at the guilt with the love of Jesus and see it was the trickery of the ego to keep me in despair. The ego gives us so many reasons to maintain our suffering.

Some might say this is denial, and indeed, we are denying that sadness and grief are a part of something true about us, and all that we disown is the belief in suffering. We are disowning **"self-concepts and deceptions and lies about the holy Son of God."** (W.248.1.7) We have long denied the truth about our reality as the Son of God. We have denied it by accepting falsity into our minds. We have come to believe that the false is true. Suffering, sadness, grief, worry, jealousy, insecurity, unworthiness, self-judgment, and self-hate are all aspects of something we have come to accept as true and part of the human condition.

We are not asked to deny whatever we are feeling, only to deny that these feelings define us. We are asked to recognize that they are ultimately not the truth about us. Now we look at our feelings and free ourselves by bringing awareness to them. The light of the Holy Spirit will bring us release from them when we willingly bring our concerns to His gentle love.

Not only do the big events in our lives bring about suffering and sadness, but we are told by Jesus, **"It is not you who are so vulnerable and open to attack that just a word, a little whisper that you do not like, a circumstance that suits you not, or an event that you did not anticipate upsets your world, and hurls it into chaos."** (T.24.III.3.1) (ACIM OE T.24.IV.28) Isn't this how it is? Don't we so often suffer, worry, agitate, and obsess about the seemingly small things that come our way? But it does not matter whether they seem big or small. Anything that takes away our peace is the same. All problems are the same. There is no order of difficulty in the illusion. All illusion, no matter how big or small, holds back the light of truth in us when we give it the power to do so.

We are called to **"Be Vigilant Only for God and His Kingdom,"** (T.6.V.C) (ACIM OE T.6.C) and to be as vigilant against the ego as we are for God. Jesus tells us we must be **"faithful in disowning falsity."** (W.248.1.2) Who we are in truth is not what we have made of ourselves. We have worked very hard to develop a concept of ourselves that is **"adjusted to the world's reality."** (T.31.V.1.1) (ACIM OE T.31.V.42) In the world, when we do this well, we are considered mature. **"The building of a concept of the self is what the learning of the world is for. This is its purpose; that you come without a self, and make one as you go along. And by the time you reach 'maturity' you have perfected it, to meet the world on equal terms, at one with its demands."** (T.31.V.1.5-7) (ACIM OE T.31.V.43) Yet now we are undoing this self-concept as it is a lie about who we really are and aims to keep us deceived by trying to convince us we are something we are not.

"There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this: I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself." (T.31.V.17.6-7) (ACIM OE T.31.V.60) Yet when we learn this, it is the beginning of our awakening to the truth about ourselves. **"And What you are will tell you of Itself."** (T.31.V.17.9) (ACIM OE T.31.V.61) We will come to know, **"I am God's Son, complete and healed and whole, shining in the reflection of His Love. In me is His creation sanctified and guaranteed eternal life. In me is love perfected, fear impossible, and joy established without opposite. I am the holy home of God Himself. I am the Heaven where His Love resides. I am His holy Sinlessness Itself, for in my purity abides His Own."** (W.PII.Q14.1.1-6)

It frightens us to let go of the self-concepts that we have made. Surrendering to love means letting go of who we currently think we are. It is to recognize we are the observer of the pain and suffering that we experience, and we can choose to withdraw our belief in it. We fear this loss of self, but Jesus assures us that we will not be hurled into reality. It is a process of opening to the truth as quickly or slowly as our fear will allow. There is no need to rush. In fact, if we think we are not going fast enough, it is a judgment on ourselves that is not helpful. We are in charge of the process.

Jesus is our guide and helper. The process begins to loosen the identification we have with the ego and gives welcome to the Self we have disowned. (W.248.1.1) Choosing to suffer blocks our **"ancient love"** for our Father, (W.248.2.1) which is always there, but not in our awareness. In fact, when we are suffering, sad, or grieving, we blame God. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we make Him responsible for bringing this turmoil into our lives. In this Lesson, we are being reminded that God has never wanted this for us. We chose this for ourselves. We chose to become something we are not. We chose to take on this false identity.

"You are wholly lovely. A perfect shaft of pure light. Before your loveliness, the stars stand transfixed and bow to the power of your will. What do children know of their creation, except what their Creator tells them? You were created above the angels because your role involves creation as well as protection. You who are in the image of the Father need bow only to Him before Whom I [Jesus] kneel with you." [from "Absence from Felicity", pg. 19]

Our love for God is so powerful that we are actually afraid of it. We cover it over with distractions, deceits, and lies. Our fear is of our redemption. [Fear of Redemption T.13.III, ACIM OE T.12.III] The pull of this attraction is so strong in us that it actually takes effort to resist. **"For you could not control your joyous response to the call of love if you heard it, and the whole world you thought you made would vanish."** (T.13.III.3.3) (ACIM OE T.12.III.13) But what is required of us is not to hide any suffering from His sight. **"Do not leave any spot of pain hidden from His Light and search your mind carefully for any thoughts you may fear to uncover."** (T.13.III.7.5) (ACIM OE T.12.III.17) Only in this way can He restore us to our magnitude.

I am as I was created, perfect and serene, and whatever suffers is not a part of me. Today, we loosen our minds from identification with lies and deceits about ourselves. Let us feel the power of our ancient love for God and His for us, as we pray: **"Father, my ancient love for You returns, and lets me love Your Son again as well. Father, I am as You created me. Now is Your Love remembered, and my own. Now do I understand that they are one."** (W.248.2.1-4)

This same love in us is extended to our brothers when the blocks to love are released. We will not recognize what we have received until we share it and extend it. This is the only way to embody what we have received.

Love and blessings, Sarah
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