

LESSON 196 • JULY 15

“It can be but myself I crucify.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To realize the truth of today’s idea and thereby take an important step forward, so that you may go ahead from here quickly, taking each future step as it comes to you.

Morning/evening quiet time: At least five minutes; ideally, thirty or more.

As usual with these final lessons of Part I, we are given no specific instructions. We are simply told to take a major step forward in our awakening by practicing today’s idea. To do this, we must see the idea not as a statement that we are doomed to continually crucify ourselves, but as a statement of liberation, which contains “the light of resurrection” (3:4) and “salvation’s song” (9:1). Our belief in the opposite of today’s idea—that we can crucify others yet remain free ourselves—has unconsciously convinced us that God is our “deadly enemy” (5:5), Who has been using the world’s injustices to punish us for our unkindness.

Today’s idea is the antidote for that. We must devote our practicing, therefore, to doing our utmost to realize the truth of this idea. This may involve applying it to specific examples in our life, or perhaps letting related thoughts come (see Lesson 42), or some other practice. The idea contains the most wonderful news, that we never actually crucify others, and therefore that God is not out to punish us. Instead, there is a murderer within us, who tricks us into attacking others so that it can crucify us from within. We must strive today to realize this. We must pray to enter into an instant of profound inner discovery, in which we look upon the murderer within, and realize that *it*, not God, is the source of all our pain. Only then can we truly, deeply view God as our Friend, and call on Him to save us from the murderer within.

Hourly remembrance: One or two minutes as the hour strikes (reduce if circumstances do not permit).

Search your mind for the happenings of the previous hour in which you felt crucified by the world, or in which you felt tempted to crucify others. In response to each one, repeat the idea.

Commentary

This is a restatement of one of the fundamental lessons of the Course, the first step of forgiveness in another form: taking the problem back from outside ourselves, withdrawing the projection, and seeing that “I am doing this to myself.”

The ego likes to misuse this idea to punish us, or to make us think we inevitably punish ourselves. The ego makes us think we are inherently self-destructive. The truth is, we do self-destructive things but we have a choice in the matter. We don’t have to do that, and at the core it is not our will to do so. We are not devils; we are the holy Son of God.

The block to awareness this lesson addresses is our belief that we have injured or “crucified” the world. It is the belief that we have made ourselves into monsters who cannot be trusted, ready to lash out without provocation to hurt and to kill.

The Course calls the acceptance of today’s idea—that any way in which we crucify another is actually crucifying ourselves—“one step we take in leading us from bondage to the state of perfect freedom” (4:1). It urges us to take “every step in its appointed sequence” (4:2), that is, not to skip steps. Today’s idea is a step that is differentiating self from the body and the ego:

Thus do you also teach your mind that you are not an ego...You will not believe
you are a body to be crucified. (3:1, 3)

Because we believe we made ourselves into egos, we think we are guilty. Because we believe in guilt, we made the body to suffer punishment. Recognizing that we are the ones inflicting

punishment upon ourselves is the first step in freeing ourselves from the whole mess. To recognize that we are the ones inflicting punishment we have to step back from the ego and body, and become aware of a greater part of ourselves. We thus realize that the Self is something other than ego or body, something greater than both. This something greater also includes my brothers and sisters. We are all part of that Self. The “others” I thought I injured are really parts of my Self.

If I believe that I can “attack another and be free” myself (6:1), I am really reacting, says the lesson, from a hidden fear of God; from the belief that God is other, an enemy who waits to destroy me. My relationship to those around me always reflects the unconscious belief I have about my relationship to God, to the ultimate Unity and Whole. “The fear of God is real to anyone who thinks this thought [that I can attack another and be free myself] is true” (6:4). If I can attack another and still be free, so can God. Therefore, God is to be feared.

Paragraph 7 seems crucial to me. It is saying that the thought I can attack others and still be free has to be *changed in form* before I can even question the idea, at least to the point where I stop being afraid of retaliation and start to become responsible, start to realize that “it is but your thoughts that bring you fear, and your deliverance depends on you” (7:3). If I begin to realize that I am not attacking others, but attacking myself, I can stop being afraid of retaliation from these “others” I thought I was attacking. Before this thought changes, I am afraid of others; after it changes, I realize my fear is coming from my own thoughts. If that is true, I have the potential for changing those thoughts.

It seems to me from the lesson that the turning point, the point at which the fear begins to abate, is found in 9:2: “If it can but be you you crucify, you did not hurt the world, and need not fear its vengeance and pursuit.” Freedom from fear of vengeance from the world is the start of freedom from fear of God, when “God...can be welcomed back within the holy mind He never left” (8:5).

I feared my own strength and freedom because I thought I was dangerous! I thought I was a threat to the world; I thought that I had injured it. No wonder I don’t want to be strong and free. If I were, I might destroy the universe. I thought I might attack and damage things to the point where the universe would turn in anger and wipe me from the face of the earth. In fact I have secretly believed, all along, that this describes things exactly as they are, and that is why I have been afraid, both of the world and of God.

The Course seems to be saying here that our unconscious fear of ourselves, hidden by our projection of cause to outside factors, has to become conscious, at least for a brief, terrifying moment. “When you realize, once and for all, that it is you you fear, the mind perceives itself as split” (10:2). “Now, for an instant, is a murderer perceived within you, eager for your death, intent on plotting punishment for you until the time when it can kill at last” (11:1).

This seems like a terrible moment; why would we deliberately seek it? “Yet in this instant is the time as well in which salvation comes” (11:2). Now, seeing the enemy within instead of outside our mind, we no longer have reason to fear God. Recognition of our own terrible responsibility makes us realize that it has not been God punishing us; it has been ourselves. We stop projecting our own dreams of vengeance onto God. “And you can call on Him to save you from illusions by His Love, calling Him Father and yourself His Son” (11:4).