

## LESSON 338 • DECEMBER 4

### “I am affected only by my thoughts.”

#### Practice instructions

See complete instructions. A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

#### Commentary

This is a key Course concept, repeated many times in different words:

*I am responsible for what I see. I choose the feelings I experience, and I decide upon the goal I would achieve. (T-21.II.2:3–4)*

I am never upset for the reason I think. (W-pI.5.Heading)

It is impossible the Son of God be merely driven by events outside of him. It is impossible that happenings that come to him were not his choice. His power of decision is the determiner of every situation in which he seems to find himself by chance or accident. (T-21.II.3:1–3)

Nothing beyond yourself can make you fearful or loving, because nothing *is* beyond you. (T-10.In.1:1)

It is your thoughts alone that cause you pain. Nothing external to your mind can hurt or injure you in any way. There is no cause beyond yourself that can reach down and bring oppression. No one but yourself affects you. There is nothing in the world that has the power to make you ill or sad, or weak or frail. But it is you who have the power to dominate all things you see by merely recognizing what you are. (W-190.5:1–6)

The Course says that accepting this is foundational to our release from our suffering. As long as we think something outside of us is affecting us and causing our pain, we will not look within for the thoughts that are truly at the root of the pain. We will believe ourselves to be innocent victims of forces beyond our control. There are no forces beyond our control; that is the whole point.

It needs but this to let salvation come to all the world. For in this single thought is everyone released at last from fear. (1:1–2)

The realization that there is nothing outside me threatening me in any way is sure to release us from fear. At first it may seem to induce guilt—because if no one else is doing it to me, I must be doing it, and that seems to be a horrendously difficult admission to make. In fact, however, the realization that I am affected only by my own thoughts brings an expansive freedom from fear.

Now has he learned that no one frightens him, and nothing can endanger him. He has no enemies, and he is safe from all external things.(1:3–4)

Let me remind myself of this today. Nothing can endanger me. I have no enemies, and nothing external can threaten me. I do not need to live in anxiety and defensiveness; I am safe.

Yet what about the fact that my own thoughts can hurt me? Isn't that something to be afraid of? It seems especially frightening that I can be affected by thoughts I have but of which I am not conscious. The eerie message of psychology that I am driven by subconscious motives that never surface in my conscious mind has always been frightening, and the Course is very much in line with those psychological theories. It is constantly telling us that we do believe certain things we are not aware of believing, and that we are driven by a subterranean guilt about separation so deeply buried that we perhaps will never, in this world, become aware of it. How can we be free from fear when these hidden enemies lurk beneath the surface of our minds, ready to explode like land mines when we unsuspectingly step on them?

His thoughts can frighten him, but since these thoughts belong to him alone, he has the power to change them and exchange each fear thought for a happy thought of love. He crucified himself. Yet God has planned that His beloved Son will be redeemed. (1:5-7)

The good news is that since our thoughts are our thoughts, we can change them. Even the subconscious ones. That is what the Course is all about. Yes, we have crucified ourselves, but God has planned a way out for us. He has planned that we be redeemed: that is, liberated or released from our self-imposed prison. It is a way of changing our minds, and nothing more than that is needed.

*All other plans will fail. (2:2)*

They will fail because they are based on an untruth, namely, that the problem is something external, something other than my thoughts. I can try to solve my problems with more money, with medicines or drugs, or by surrounding myself by people who seem to supply what I seem to lack. Being external solutions they will all fail, because the real problem is my own thoughts. No matter how ingenious they are, my plans will fail, because I am solving the wrong problems.

*And I will have thoughts that will frighten me, until I learn that You have given me the only Thought that leads me to salvation. Mine alone will fail, and lead me nowhere. But the Thought You gave me promises to lead me home, because it holds Your promise to Your Son. (2:3-5)*

Even though I know the truth of this lesson, I will still have frightening thoughts, thoughts that seem to hurt me. That is not anything to be concerned about. When such thoughts surface I can learn to shrug and tell myself, "So I still have an ego. What else is new?" I can bring thoughts that frighten into the presence of the Thought given by God, the Holy Spirit. He is the "Thought that leads me to salvation," the Thought of forgiveness and love. He is a Thought full of promise and certainty, a Thought that tells me I am God's beloved Son, with nothing to fear (as we saw in yesterday's lesson, "My sinlessness protects me from all harm").

Let me today be willing to recognize my fear thoughts when they arise, rather than denying I have them, so that with the help of the Holy Spirit I can change them and exchange them for a happy thought of love.