

LESSON 72—MARCH 13

“Holding grievances is an attack on God’s plan for salvation.”

Practice instructions

Purpose: To stop attacking God’s plan by miscasting it as something it is not. To instead welcome it as it is, and realize it has already been accomplished in you.

Longer: Two times, for ten to fifteen minutes.

This is another exercise in trying to hear God’s Voice. This time you are asking God what His plan for salvation is, in order to replace your assumptions about what it is. Your grievances have depicted God in your image, as a separate body who feels wronged by the misbehavior of others (which includes *your* misbehavior). In this view, for you to become reconciled with Him, He demands (like any ego) that you sacrifice your pleasures on His behalf and pay the price for your misdeeds. Can’t you see that this view of His plan is why you’ve pushed it away?

In the practice period, lay aside your assumptions about what God’s plan is and ask Him what it is. Ask, “*What is salvation, Father? I do not know [try to mean this]. Tell me, that I may understand.*” While listening, the attitude you hold is everything. Be confident that He will answer. “Be determined to hear” (12:6).

When you feel your confidence wane, repeat the question again, consciously “remembering that you are asking of the infinite Creator of infinity, Who created you like Himself” (12:1). It may help to vary the wording of the sentences. For instance, “*What is Your plan for salvation? I let go of my assumptions. I really want to understand it.*” Listen for the faintest promptings. Trust what you hear. You may want to write it down afterwards.

Frequent reminders: One, maybe two, per hour, for a minute or so.

Say, “*Holding grievances is an attack on God’s plan for salvation. Let me accept it instead. What is salvation, Father?*” Then wait in silence and listen for His answer, preferably with eyes closed.

Commentary

This is a long lesson, and a tough one. The scope of ideas presented here is daunting even to an experienced student of the Course (including me). There is no way I can give a detailed explanation of all the ideas in this brief commentary, so I am mainly going to focus on a few interesting ideas.

The general thrust of the argument here is that holding grievances is always concerned in some way with the behavior of a body. Grievances thus confuse the person with his body; they are based on the assumption that bodies are what we are, and bodies are what God created. Since bodies die, God is a liar when He promises life. Death is the ultimate punishment for our sins, and that is what God gives us.

The ego then comes into the picture in the role of “savior,” telling us, “Okay, you’re a body. So take the little you can get” (6:6). We see salvation as some kind of bodily function. Either we hate our bodies and humiliate them or we love them and try to exalt them (7:2–3).

As long as “the body stands at the center of your concept of yourself, you are attacking God’s plan for salvation” (7:4). Why so? Because God’s plan has nothing to do with the body; it concerns the mind, the being you are.

One primary thing the lesson is trying to get across is that we are not bodies. “It is the body that is outside us, and is not our concern. To be without a body is to be in our natural state” (9:2–3). This flies in the face of our common perception. The nearly universal assumption of man is that we are *inside* our bodies. To say the body is *outside* us seems to make no sense at all. But actually, it isn’t an entirely inconceivable idea. There is a way of understanding how our awareness can *appear* to be in the body when in fact it is elsewhere.

Many of you are probably familiar with the idea of virtual reality (VR); that is, an artificial world you can experience via a computer. My son, Ben, is getting his Computer Science Ph.D. at Georgia Tech with a strong emphasis on virtual reality. Not long ago he visited VR laboratories in Japan, where they were experimenting with VR in connection with robots. He put on a VR helmet (so his eyes and ears now beheld and heard what was projected on the screen of the helmet or played through its speakers); he wore a VR sleeve on his arm and hand. These were connected to a robot, which had a camera and microphone on its “head” and whose mechanical arm and hand responded to the movements of Ben’s arm and hand. He was seeing what the robot “saw,” hearing what it “heard,” and picking up objects with its hand.

Then he had a very odd experience. He turned his (the robot’s) head, looked across the room, and saw his fleshly body sitting on the other side, wearing all this weird-looking gear. Ben’s awareness was inside the robot, although his body was on the other side of the room. He seemed to be separate from his body.

Our bodies, I believe, are very much like that VR robot. Our minds receive only the input of the body’s eyes and ears, and so we are fooled into thinking we are inside of it. In reality we are “somewhere else,” not inside the body at all. What we are seeing in our bodies is, in truth, only “virtual reality.” The body is “outside” of us in fact, and being without a body is our natural state.

One of the aims of the Course is to help us “see our Self as separate from the body” (9:5). I hope these thoughts provide a little help in conceptualizing that possibility.

The practice periods have us focusing on asking, “What is salvation, Father? I do not know” (10:6–7). The intent is to get us to let go of our existing ideas of “salvation,” which are all focused on the body, either exalting it or abasing it, so that something else can take the place of those ideas. Salvation lies in acceptance of what we are—and what we are is *not* a body. The lesson leaves the answering of the question about salvation to our inner listening. If we ask, it says, something will answer us (11:3; 12:5).