

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 5, Section VI

Time and Eternity

Overview of the Section

A rough outline of this section helps in following it, because it makes a digression within a digression. It begins talking about time, eternity, and delay in time; then, it switches to discussing one particular cause for delay, guilt, and the idea behind guilt, which is that God is judging us (corrected in the image of the higher court). Then, it switches to talking about examples from the Bible we have understood as portraying a judgmental God, and reinterprets these for us. After that, it “unwinds” the digression, coming back from the examples to finish the discussion about the higher court. Finally, it completes the discussion about time and delay by speaking of patience. The section also highlights the concept of “wholeness” that runs through the chapter, emphasizing that we are part of the Kingdom and cannot be lost. In outline form it looks like this:

1. **Paragraph 1:** Time, eternity and delay.
 - 1.1. **Paragraphs 2–4:** Guilt as the preserver of time, and how God as our judge is misperceived. Our fear of the Higher Court.
 - 1.1.1. **Paragraphs 5–9:** Examples from the Bible of how we misperceive God as judging, along with corrected interpretations.
 - 1.2. **Paragraph 10:** How the Higher Court judges; i.e., by dismissing the case.
2. **Paragraphs 11–12:** The need for patience in time with ourselves and our brothers.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹God in His knowledge is not waiting, but His Kingdom is bereft while *you* wait. ²All the Sons of God are waiting for your return, just as *you* are waiting for *theirs*. ³Delay does not matter in eternity, but it is tragic in time. ⁴You have elected to be in time rather than eternity, and therefore believe you *are* in time [Ur: and have therefore changed your belief in your status]. ⁵Yet your [Ur: But] election is both free and alterable. ⁶You do *not* belong in time. ⁷Your place is *only* in eternity, where God Himself placed you forever.

• Study Question •

1. *Based on this paragraph, what should be your attitude toward delay in your own spiritual progress?*

The end of the preceding section said that our continuing decision to remain separated, which induces a continuing sense of guilt and fear, delays our realization of the Kingdom of Heaven and our part in it. Actually, the discussion of delay began back in Section III: “Delay is of the ego, because time is its concept. Both time and delay are meaningless in eternity” (T-5.III.5:1–2). This section continues that discussion, showing how our guilt and fear have been projected onto God so that we fear His terrible judgment. The fear adds to the delay we experience because it keeps us from reaching out to God for healing.

The section begins by pointing out that if we still feel “bereft” (1:1), our delay in fact deprives the entire Kingdom of our joy. God, by contrast, is whole and complete; He isn’t waiting for anything. It isn’t God Who is bereft, it is His Kingdom—us, in other words. “The Kingdom of Heaven *is* you” (T-4.III.1:4). All of us as Sons of God are waiting for one another’s return, and we are deprived of each other while we wait (1:2), which is tragic (1:3).

I really value sentence 3: “Delay does not matter in eternity, but it *is* tragic in time.” I have encountered students of *A Course in Miracles* who—because the Course teaches that the world is illusory, that we are not our bodies, and that sickness, sin and death do not really exist—try to maintain that nothing upsets them, or that nothing which happens here really matters. To them, *nothing* should be viewed as tragic or you are somehow unspiritual. I don’t believe it. What happens in time *is* tragic. When a family member dies of a drug overdose or a lingering disease, that is tragic. When a loved one gets off alcohol and drugs, and now talks about the joy of having a family again, *that* is a cause for great joy. Nobody can tell me differently.

It reassures me to know that Jesus, who has finished his path of enlightenment, can say that delay is “tragic in time.” For me, the “nothing upsets me” attitude displayed by some is problematic. I am not attracted to a spirituality so remote that it cannot mourn with those that mourn (See the Bible, Romans 12:15: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”). Yes, in eternity we may come to know that nothing lasting occurred in time and therefore it is not worth our tears, but we are not *in* eternity now, at least not in our awareness. To remain unmoved in the face of human pain and suffering seems to me to lack humanity.

Yet, we don’t belong in time; we belong in eternity (1:6–7). Having entirely forgotten what eternity is like, and remembering only time—in fact, remembering only one tiny span of time—I can’t say that I fully understand this or feel heart-felt agreement with it. I rather *like* my life in time; I don’t know for sure that I want to leave it behind. Not just yet! Yet, it would not take that much to convince me that there *could be* something better!

I surely like to think that there is, since the span of time I get to experience is so very, very short.

The overall point of this paragraph is that *delay matters*. Of course it does. The Course talks a lot about saving time. It urges us to respond to temptation quickly (T-2.VIII.2:8; T-7.VIII.5:5–6), immediately (T-2.III.4:3; W-pI.32.6:1), instantly (T-18.V.6:1). Once free from time, the delay will no longer matter, but while we experience ourselves in time (1:4) it is tragic to remain in suffering when another choice is possible (1:5). “Why wait for Heaven?” (W-pI.131.6:1).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Guilt feelings are the **preservers** of time. ²They induce fears of [Ur: *future*] retaliation or abandonment, and thus ensure that the future will be [Ur: *remain*] like the past. ³This **is** the ego's continuity. ⁴It gives the ego a false sense of security by believing [Ur: *through the belief*] that you cannot escape from it. ⁵But you can and **must**. ⁶God offers you the continuity of eternity in exchange. ⁷When you choose to make this exchange, you will simultaneously exchange guilt for joy [Ur: *peace*], viciousness for love, and pain for peace [Ur: *joy*]. ⁸My role is only to unchain your will and set it free. ⁹Your ego cannot accept this freedom, and will oppose it [Ur: *your free decision*] at every possible moment and in every possible way. ¹⁰And as its maker, you recognize [Ur: *know*] what it can do because you **gave it** the power to do it. [Ur: *The mind does indeed know its {own} power, because the mind does indeed know God.*]

• Study Question •

2. *Think back on your own experience of guilt. How have your guilt feelings preserved time and the ego's sense of continuity (1–4)?*

A key thought in this section that ties together its apparently disparate themes is in 2:1, “Guilt feelings are the preservers of time.” Therefore, the way to escape from our experience of time and begin to experience eternity is to be freed from guilt. This will lead into the discussion about God's Higher Court, which always dismisses the charges of guilt that have been made against us.

If I can become free from guilt I will also be free from time. Guilt feelings preserve time by arousing the fear that God will retaliate or abandon me (2:2). This means that my experience of being separate from God, which has characterized my past, will continue into the future. That, of course, means that the ego continues as well (2:3). Without guilt, the way is open to believing that the future will *not* contain that separation, but rather will bring a glorious (re)union.

The ego has set things up about guilt and time so that it appears as if we cannot escape from it (2:4). But we can, and we *must* (2:5)! Hooray! Whenever we feel deeply

discouraged, whenever we begin to question that enlightenment is possible for us, let us remember that we can and we must escape from the ego.

Oh! To “exchange guilt for peace, viciousness for love, and pain for joy” (2:7)! Wonderful! This is what awaits us when we choose God’s continuity of freedom (2:8) in eternity in place of the ego’s continuity of never-ending guilt in time.

The ego cannot accept this freedom (2:9). Guilt is what keeps the ego alive. Guilt is its breath: “Without guilt the ego has no life...” (T-13.I.2:5). So, with tooth and nail, it will resist allowing you to be freed from guilt. It will “oppose it at every possible moment and in every possible way” (2:9). The ego cannot survive your realization of innocence. This is the choice we are making: guilt, or guiltlessness (see T-14.III.4).

The last line of the paragraph is interesting. It seems to be saying that we know very well what our egos can do. We pretend to ourselves that we don’t know. We express shock at how all-pervading the ego is, how incorrigible it is, how stubbornly determined it is to oppose the freedom of spirit, but underneath *we know darn well* what the ego will do, because we made the ego and gave it the power to do everything that it is doing. What an odd picture we present! We set up the entire game, and then we act surprised by what happens! In reality, we are still totally in control, even when we think we are out of control. We ourselves are pulling all the strings.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Remember the Kingdom always, and remember that you who are part of the Kingdom cannot be lost. ²The Mind that was in me *is* in you, for God creates with perfect fairness. ³Let the Holy Spirit remind you always of His fairness, and let me teach you how to share it with your brothers. ⁴How else can the chance to claim it for yourself be given you? ⁵[Ur: What you do not understand is that] The two voices speak for different interpretations of the same thing simultaneously; or almost simultaneously, for the ego always speaks first. ⁶Alternate interpretations were [are] unnecessary until the first one was [Ur: has been] made [Ur: and speaking itself was unnecessary before the ego was made].

• Study Question •

3. *Try to find one or two earlier lines in Sections I to IV of this chapter that spoke of the “Mind” that is in us. What is the Mind that was in Jesus and is in us as well?*

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We are asked to remember (or to be reminded) of the Kingdom and our part in it, of God’s fairness in giving all of us the same Christ Mind as Jesus had, and of the fact that we cannot be lost (3:1–3). Sentence 2 is an indirect reference to the Bible:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5 KJV)

Jesus is saying that the Mind that was in Christ *is* in us. The Bible verse admonishing us to *let* this mind be in us is really asking us to recognize It, to claim It as ours.

If indeed we have such a powerful mind, we must acknowledge that, in our seeming battle with the ego, we are pulling all the strings. Our mind knows its own power, but if we resist acknowledging that our mind has made the ego, we will simultaneously be denying the very power of mind that can save us.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always seeking to remind us that God has, in His fairness, given the Mind of Christ equally to all His creations. Jesus will teach us how to share this awareness with our brothers (3:3), which is the only way we can come to claim this fairness of God for ourselves (3:4). As I have been saying, the way to do this centers on releasing ourselves and everyone from guilt.

“At every possible moment and in every possible way” (2:9), the ego will speak for condemnation and punishment, while the Holy Spirit will speak for forgiveness and freedom. The two voices are always there in our minds, offering their contrasting interpretations of the same situations and events. They seem to be speaking simultaneously, but actually the ego’s harsh voice always comes first, followed almost instantaneously by the soothing Voice for God, correcting the false interpretation that the ego offers (3:5).

“...the ego always speaks first” (3:5). Course students love quoting this phrase, and they often seem to love misunderstanding it. Many times students will interpret this sentence to mean that when you listen for inner guidance, you will hear both the voice of the ego and the Voice for God. They will speak nearly simultaneously, but the ego will always be the first to speak. This becomes a key to distinguishing between the guidance of the ego and that of the Holy Spirit: the first thought is always from the ego.

But that isn’t what this sentence means at all, if we consider it in the larger context of this section. If we look through the section for other references to the idea of the ego speaking first and the Holy Spirit speaking to correct it, we find two clear ones:

The ego speaks in judgment, and the Holy Spirit reverses its decision.... (4:1)

...the ego's interpretations [of the Bible] are misleading, but...the Holy Spirit can reinterpret them in His Own light. (5:1)

The ego speaks first in that it always gives a condemning judgment. Its purpose is to produce guilt and fear. The Holy Spirit then acts to correct this interpretation, and thus to free us from guilt. As Jesus points out in the very next sentence following the one containing the remark about the ego’s speaking first: “Alternate interpretations were unnecessary until the first one was made” (3:6). There was no need for the corrective interpretation of the Holy Spirit until the ego had introduced its false interpretation. The whole purpose of the Holy Spirit, as we have been seeing in this chapter of the Text, is as *an Answer* from God to the separation, an Answer to the ego.

The paragraphs about Bible passages that follow are not random insertions in this section. These reinterpretations of Bible passages we normally perceive as fear-inducing are concrete examples of the very thing this sentence is speaking about. The ego speaks

first and interprets them fearfully, so that the passages seem to condemn us as guilty sinners deserving God's wrath. The Holy Spirit reverses that judgment, and interprets the passages as granting us release: "His verdict will always be 'thine is the Kingdom,' because He was given to remind you of what you are" (10:8).

This line (3:5), then, has nothing to do with *guidance*. The Course *is not* teaching that "the first thought always comes from the ego," which simply isn't true! Rather, this sentence refers to the way the ego always tries to induce guilt, and the way the Holy Spirit responds to release us from guilt.

Paragraph 4 & 5

4. ¹The ego speaks in judgment, and the Holy Spirit reverses its decision [Ur: decisions], much as a higher court [Ur: the Supreme court] has the power to reverse a lower court's decisions in [Ur: about the laws of] this world. ²The ego's decisions are **always** wrong, because they are based on the error [Ur: on a complete fallacy which] they were made to uphold. ³**Nothing** the ego perceives is interpreted correctly. ⁴Not only does the ego cite Scripture for its purpose, but it even interprets Scripture as a witness for itself. ⁵The Bible is a fearful thing in the ego's judgment [Ur: to the ego, because of its prejudiced judgment]. ⁶Perceiving it as frightening [fearful], it interprets it fearfully. ⁷Being afraid [Ur: Having made *you* afraid], you do not appeal to the Higher Court because you believe its judgment would also be **against** you.

5. ¹There are many examples of [Ur: We need site {sic} only a few examples to see] how the ego's interpretations are misleading [Ur: have misled you. A favorite ego quotation is "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." Another is "Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord." Still another is "I will visit the sins of the fathers unto the third and the fourth generation." And also, "The wicked shall perish." There are many others, but if you will let the Holy Spirit reinterpret these in its own light, they will suffice.], but a few will suffice to show how the Holy Spirit can reinterpret them in His Own Light.

• Study Question •

4. *Do you ever feel reluctant to approach God in prayer or meditation, or to ask Him for help, because you feel unclean or unworthy in some way? What false belief about the Holy Spirit, or about God's Higher Court, is the basis for such reluctance?*

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The ego always speaks in judgment; the Holy Spirit undoes judgment (4:1). Another way of seeing it is that the ego is always trying to induce fear, while the Holy Spirit is always releasing us from fear. The illustration of a higher court overturning the decision of a lower court has always appealed to me. The "lower court" is, of course, the ego. Its

judgmental decisions or interpretations “are always wrong” or incorrect (4:2–3) because they are based on separation or the belief that we can usurp God’s power and have done so. That belief is “the complete fallacy they were made to uphold” (4:2; compare with T-1.VI.3:1, “The idea of orders of need, which follows from the original error that one can be separated from God, requires correction at its own level before the error of perceiving levels at all can be corrected”).

One example of the way the ego can interpret nearly anything as evidence for its case is the way the ego interprets Scripture (the Bible) (4:4). The point here is that if anything should be speaking *against* the ego, it is the Bible; yet the ego can twist even that—and has! In the ego’s hands “the Bible is a fearful thing” (4:5). That is certainly true in many bibliocentric Christian churches. Such churches are often depicted as emphasizing “hell-fire and brimstone,” and “the fear of God.” If you listen to some preachers you get the idea that they are trying to scare people into Heaven. Perhaps the epitome of that approach to Scripture was in a sermon by Jonathan Edwards, the Puritan preacher of the Eighteenth Century who sparked the so-called “Great Awakening.” He titled his famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” The title says it all! But none of us are entirely free from the ego’s fearful interpretations.

Think for a moment of the four lines from the Bible that are quoted in the paragraphs that follow. These verses are favorite ego quotations. It’s easy to see why. How have you understood them previously, before reading about them in the Course?

As ye sow, so shall ye reap.

Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord.

I will visit the sins of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation.

The wicked shall perish.

If we read these lines together, what picture of God do they bring to our minds? Don’t they evoke an image of a wrathful God, implacably meting out harsh punishment for every wrong-doing? “Vengeance is mine.” “The wicked shall perish.” What else could these verses *mean* except that God punishes sinners, and punishes them severely?

With this kind of fear in our minds we are convinced that, even if we pleaded our case in the most favorable light we could manage (and some things in our life have very few favorable points to argue), we would still be judged as grossly guilty. The “lower court” certainly has reached that conclusion! Believing that the Great Judge of the Higher Court delights in frying sinners in hell, we don’t even bother to appeal our case (4:7).

We will return to the theme of the Higher Court in paragraph 10, so keep it in mind. But for now, Jesus wants to show some examples of how the Holy Spirit reinterprets the ego’s fearful interpretation of the Bible (5:1), turning a message of fear and punishment into one of love and release. These are good examples of how the Holy Spirit will reinterpret the entire Bible when we are willing to read it “in His Own light” (5:1). Anything that would foster fear is reinterpreted in a way that brings love and joy to our hearts.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹“As ye sow, so shall ye reap” He interprets to mean what you consider worth cultivating you will cultivate in yourself. ²Your judgment of what is worthy makes [Ur: *does make*] it worthy for you.

• Study Question •

5. *Before you read any further, what meaning have you have given to the words, “As ye sow, so shall ye reap,” in the past?*

Instead of the fearful idea that we will be punished for every wrong thought we ever had or wrong deed we ever did, the Holy Spirit interprets this verse in a wholly positive way. Picking up on the “cultivation” theme of sowing and reaping, He interprets this to mean that we will cultivate whatever we think is worth cultivating. We determine the return of value by our own choices about what is valuable.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹“Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord” is easily reinterpreted [Ur: *explained*] if you remember that ideas increase only by being shared. ²The statement emphasizes that vengeance **cannot** be shared. ³Give it therefore to the Holy Spirit, Who will undo it in you because it does not **belong** in your mind, which is part of God.

• Study Question •

6. *What should we do with thoughts of vengeance that arise in our minds?*

When most people with an orthodox Christian background read the words, “Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19 which is quoting, in turn, Deuteronomy 32:35), they picture God as wrathful, ready to rain fire down on sinners. For readers of the Old Testament, images of Sodom and Gomorrah being consumed by fire come to mind, or the Red Sea crashing in on Pharoah’s chariots, or the global flood that wiped out everyone but Noah and his family. The verse seems to portray God as claiming the exclusive right to avenge wrong-doing: “Don’t take vengeance; leave it to Me!” Unquestionably, such a picture of God is fear-inducing, and does little to encourage anyone to approach God to ask His help. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we have the lingering fear that if we make ourselves known to God, He may just turn on us and, like the Red Queen in “Through the Looking Glass,” cry, “Off with his head!”

How can these words be reinterpreted to be empty of fear? The Course asks us to “remember that ideas increase only by being shared” (7:1). It tells us that the words of the Bible mean simply that vengeance *cannot* be shared. Since we want only thoughts that can be shared, vengeance does not belong in our minds. We should give up all thoughts of vengeance and turn them over to the Holy Spirit that they may be undone.

Remember that the point here is not the particular meaning of a particular Bible verse, but rather the way that the ego speaks first to interpret the verse fearfully, and then the Holy Spirit speaks to undo that fearful interpretation. I think Jesus is saying that, if we listen carefully to the Holy Spirit, *everything in the Bible* can be stripped of any fearful content.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹“I will visit the sins of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation,” as interpreted by the ego, is particularly vicious. ²It becomes merely an attempt to guarantee the ego’s own survival [Ur: *beyond itself*]. ³To the Holy Spirit, the statement means that in later generations He can still reinterpret what former generations had misunderstood, and thus release the thoughts from the ability to produce fear [Ur: *Actually, all it really means is that the Holy Spirit in later generations retains the power to interpret correctly what former generations have thought, and thus release their thoughts from the ability to produce fear anywhere in the Sonship*].

The words referred to here (the quote is not exact) come from several places in the Old Testament where the Ten Commandments are repeated. They are part of the second commandment, about making idols and graven images, which says, in part:

You shall not make for yourself an idol...for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.”

(Exodus 20:4–5 NRSV)

Once again, these words almost inevitably give rise to thoughts of a god of wrath who is prone to seemingly unreasonable and even unfair punishment. As Jesus says here, the ego’s interpretation is “particularly vicious” (8:1). If a man sins, his children down to the third and fourth generation will suffer the consequences, regardless of their innocence! This transfers fear down the generations and guarantees the survival of the ego (8:2). Thousands of people have abandoned their belief in God (or tried to), unwilling to accept a god who thus declares Himself to be “jealous.” Most religious intolerance is based on passages like this from the Bible.

I really like the way the Holy Spirit reinterprets this! He says the words mean that even in later generations, He can still *undo* the sins of the fathers by reinterpreting their mistaken thoughts (8:3). In this manner, the present generation, rather than being trapped by inherited fear, can be released from fear. The thoughts of the fathers are reinterpreted, not as sins deserving punishment, but as thoughts of fear that were calling for love.

If it seems that Jesus is stretching the meaning here, it is interesting to note that, while the NRSV translates the Hebrew word as “punishing” instead of the KJV’s “visiting,” Strong’s Hebrew dictionary gives the primary root of this word as “to visit, with friendly

or hostile intent,” and therefore, only by analogy does it mean “punish.” It could equally well mean “care for”!

Paragraph 9

9. ¹“The wicked shall perish” becomes a statement of Atonement [Ur: is merely a statement of fact], if the word “perish” is [Ur: properly understood.] understood as “be undone.” ²Every loveless thought **must** be undone, ~~a word the ego cannot even understand~~. ³To the ego, to be undone means to be destroyed [Ur: Even the word “undone” is fearful to the ego, which interprets “I am undone” as “I am destroyed.”]. ⁴The ego will **not** be destroyed because it is part of **your** thought, but because it is uncreative and therefore unsharing, it **will** be reinterpreted [Ur: entirely] to release you from fear. ⁵The part of your mind that you have given **to** the ego will merely return to the Kingdom, where your whole mind **belongs**. [Ur: The ego is a form of *arrest*, but arrest is merely delay. It does *not* involve the concept of police at all, although the ego welcomes that interpretation.] ⁶You **can** delay the completion of the Kingdom, but you **cannot** introduce the concept of fear [Ur: *assault*] into it.

• Study Question •

7. *Try to understand the reasoning here: “The wicked shall perish” means “Every loveless thought must be undone.”(9:2). What is the common element or similar meaning given by the Holy Spirit to the words “perish,” “undone,” and “reinterpreted” that enables Him to make this reinterpretation?*

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“The wicked shall perish” is from the Psalms:

But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD [shall be] as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away. (Psalm 37:20, KJV)

Now, it surely seems that the original intent of the human author of those words was that *the people* who were God’s enemies would be melted like animal fat in a fire—pretty gruesome words. The rest of the psalm in which they occur does indeed call down various calamities on “the wicked.” But, in this case, a more recent translation gives this verse a much gentler tone that lends itself more easily to the interpretation the Course gives it:

But the wicked perish, and the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away. (Psalms 37:20 NRSV)

So when Jesus gives the reinterpretation of the Holy Spirit, he must be telling us what *the Holy Spirit* originally meant by them. That is, he is giving us the original inspiration that was misinterpreted by the psalmist.

The true meaning of “the wicked shall perish,” according to Jesus, is that “every loveless thought must be undone” (9:2). It isn’t about people or souls, and it isn’t about destruction, which is what the ego thinks (9:3). It is about *thoughts* and about undoing those thoughts by *reinterpreting* them (9:4). The ego itself is only an uncreative thought, and even *it* will not be destroyed, but reinterpreted. Nothing will be destroyed or lost. Since “evil” or the ego does not actually exist, it will vanish like smoke. The part of the mind given over to the ego will be returned to the Kingdom, rejoining the wholeness of Mind (9:5). *Nowhere* in this picture is there any room for fear (9:6). All the ego can do is delay the completion of the Kingdom; it can’t prevent it.

That absence of fear is the whole point of these reinterpretations of the Bible. The ego has used even the Bible to support its aim of keeping us in fear. The Holy Spirit can strip the fear out of *any* passage of the Bible, even those most notorious for having fearful implications. Note how the fear, in each case, arises because, seen through the ego’s eyes, they depict God’s punishment of sin. That is exactly what the ego *wants* us to see. In each case, the Holy Spirit sees the verse as depicting God’s work of cleaning up and dissipating our mis-thoughts.

It may well be that the original writers, under the influence of their own egos, intended the verses to be understood from the ego’s viewpoint. It does not matter, because, as always, the Holy Spirit can use what the ego has made to undo what the ego has done.

Paragraph 10

See note at Paragraph 11.

10. ¹You need not fear the Higher Court will condemn you [Ur: The Higher Court will not condemn you.]. ²It will merely dismiss the case against you. ³There can be no case against a child of God, and every witness to guilt in God’s creations is bearing false witness to God Himself. ⁴Appeal everything you believe gladly to God’s Own Higher Court, because it speaks for Him and therefore speaks truly. ⁵It will dismiss the case against you, however carefully you have built it up. ⁶The case may be fool-proof, but it is not God-proof. ⁷The Holy Spirit [Ur: The voice for God] will not hear it [Ur: at all], because He can only witness truly. ⁸His verdict will always be “thine is the Kingdom,” because He was given to you to remind you of what you are.

• Study Question •

8. *We return now to the theme of the Higher Court, which was interrupted after paragraph 4. Free of the ego’s fearful interpretations, we are now free to appeal our case (of guilt) to the Court. (a) If we bring our feelings of guilt to the Holy Spirit, what will He always do? (b) Explain what is meant by, “The case may be fool-proof, but it is not God-proof”(10:6).*



If you read paragraph 4 and then skip directly to paragraph 10, you will clearly see how the thought that ends the fourth paragraph is continued in the tenth.

Returning to the theme last visited in paragraph 4, Jesus tells us that our fear that the Higher Court (the Holy Spirit) will uphold the lower court's (the ego's) condemnation is unfounded (10:1). The Higher Court will dismiss the case! (10:2, 10:5). There won't even be a trial; the Court won't even "hear" the case (10:7). You can almost picture this genial, smiling judge, saying, "The charges are unfounded. Case dismissed!" What an image to call to mind whenever you are feeling guilty!

Do you really appreciate the radical nature of what is being said here? "There can be no case against a child of God" (10:3). *No child of God can be guilty*. That includes you, and it also includes every one of God's creations, even that person you love to hate, that one that seems completely without any redeeming traits. The Course throws guilt entirely out the window. To accuse God's creations of guilt is to malign God Himself, because He created them (10:3). As was said earlier, the only possible reason for guilt is the continuing decision to remain separated (T-5.V.8:1); it is a mistaken understanding resulting from our belief that we are *cut off from* God. Guilt must be eliminated from our minds:

As long as you believe that guilt is justified in any way, in anyone, whatever he may do, you will not look within, where you would always find Atonement. The end of guilt will never come as long as you believe there is a reason for it. For you must learn that guilt is always totally insane, and has no reason. (T13.X. 6:1-3)

The Holy Spirit, Judge of the Higher Court, will throw out all charges against you. Therefore, "appeal everything you believe gladly" to this Judge (10:4). If you were accused of a crime and *knew* that the judge in a particular court was *guaranteed* to dismiss the charges, wouldn't you hurry to get to that courtroom?

In our case, we have built the case of guilt against ourselves (10:5). And we may have absolutely convinced ourselves that we *are* guilty. It may seem inconceivable to us that there is any way to look at the situation that frees us from guilt. We've built a fool-proof case against ourselves. Well, "the case may be fool-proof, but it is not God-proof" (10:6). Hallelujah! No guilt can stand before the Atonement. The verdict will always be, not only to dismiss the charge of guilt, but to grant us the Kingdom! (10:8) This Judge is here, not just to free us from condemnation, but to remind us of what we are: God's children, God's heirs (10:8).

Paragraph 11 & 12

NOTE: The words of sentences 1 to 3 of paragraph 11 originally came at the beginning of paragraph 10. See how it sounds to read them in that context. Clearly, Jesus is urging us not to look at the "dark glass" that contains the ego's distorted picture of us, but to listen instead to the judgment of the Higher Court.

11. ¹When I said “I am come as a light into the world,” I meant that I [surely] came to share the light with you. ²Remember my reference to the ego’s dark glass [4.IV.1], and remember also that I said, “Do not look there.” ³It is still true that where you look to find yourself is up to you. ⁴Your patience with your brother is your patience with yourself. [Your patience with each other is your patience with your selves.] ⁵Is not a child of God worth patience? ⁶I have shown you infinite patience because my will is that of our Father, from Whom I learned of infinite patience. ⁷His Voice was in me as It is in you, speaking for patience towards the Sonship in the Name of Its Creator.

12. ¹Now you must learn [Ur: What you need to learn now is] that only infinite patience produces [Ur: can produce] immediate effects. ²This is the way in which time is exchanged for eternity. ³Infinite patience calls upon infinite love, and by producing results *now* it renders time unnecessary. [Ur: To say that time is temporary is merely redundant.] ⁴We have repeatedly said that time is a learning device to be abolished when it is no longer useful. ⁵The Holy Spirit, Who speaks for God in time, also knows that time is meaningless. ⁶He reminds you of this in every passing moment of time, because it is His special function to return you to eternity and remain to bless your creations there. ⁷He is the only blessing you can truly give, because He is [Ur: so] truly blessed. ⁸Because He has been given you freely by God, you must give Him as you received Him.

• Study Question •

9. *Think of someone with whom you have felt impatience concerning their personal growth, particularly about their spiritual growth. It might be a family member or friend. Why, according to this passage, should you be more patient with them?*



In sentence 1, Jesus quotes himself from the Gospels (John 12:46). He came “as a light into the world” not in the sense of being a standard against which we measure and condemn ourselves, but in the sense of *sharing* that light, of radiating it into us.

There are *three* references here to Section IV of Chapter 4. The references to “the ego’s dark glass” and not looking there (11:2) are both from T-4.IV.9:2. Sentence 3 contains the third reference; these words should be in quotes as well (and *were* in quotes in earlier manuscripts, prior to editing): “where you look to find yourself is up to you.” This is an exact quote of T-4.IV.1:8. If you recall, that section is the one titled, “This Need Not Be,” and concerns mental vigilance. Jesus is quite clearly relating the current discussion to that earlier one. Appealing our guilt-related thoughts to the Holy Spirit is another kind of mental vigilance we are intended to practice. The ego is showing us its dark glass, reflecting a filthy image of ourselves. We have the option of not looking at that dark image, but listening instead to the Higher Court’s declaration of release.

The measure of your self-forgiveness is your forgiveness of others. I believe that “patience” here refers to the overlooking of guilt, or forgiveness (11:4). Your brothers are your mirrors: “He is the mirror of yourself, wherein you see the judgment you have laid on both of you” (T-24.VI.8:6). Are you impatient with others? If so, do not be surprised if you find yourself wracked with guilt. Are you patient with others? Then you will find rest in your own mind.

Jesus has shown us “infinite patience” (11:6) because, as God’s children, we are worth it (11:5). God’s Voice, the Holy Spirit, was in Jesus, displaying that patience toward us; now, that Voice is in us. If we are listening to it, we will be as patient with others in the Sonship as Jesus is patient with us.

We want immediate results, and patience seems impossible. Paradoxically, however, infinite patience is what “produces immediate effects” (12:1). Think about it. When your slothful, lackadaisical spiritual progress is met with infinite patience from Jesus, how does that make you feel? I know that, for me, it lifts my spirits and makes me renew my determination to pick up my feet and walk a little faster. (For an example of his infinite patience with us, and the Father’s as well, read the Introduction to Review V in the Workbook.) When I am not performing up to par in any way, if someone close to me gets impatient, it only makes me feel guilty and angry. If they meet my deficiency with patience and love, it motivates me to do better.

Patience like this is an expression of the miracle of forgiveness, and as such, exchanges time for eternity (12:2). The person whose guilt is erased by our patient forgiveness experiences healing. I, who extended patience to this person, am also healed. I see him or her *now* as whole and complete, so time becomes unnecessary (12:3). Right perception sees a person as already perfect; it sees them as they are in eternity, where no time exists. In “every passing moment of time” the Holy Spirit is reminding us of this timeless vision (12:6). As we accept that vision and extend it to our brothers and sisters, including them in its beneficent gaze, we give them the blessing of the Holy Spirit (12:7). We recognize the Holy Spirit *in them* (T-5.III.1:1). We acknowledge their perfection as children of God, and so strengthen that awareness *of ourselves* (T-5.III.3:5). We give the Holy Spirit to them as we have received Him (12:8; see also T-5.IV.7:2).

Answer Key

1. Delay is “tragic in time,” not something to be taken lightly. From the perspective of eternity, delay does not matter because time does not exist, but from within the illusion of time it is tragic; that is, it is unfortunate and brings pain. The sense of the paragraph is that we should be conscious of delay and avoid it; “His Kingdom is bereft while *you* wait” (1:1).
2. For me, guilt feelings have brought on a fear of punishment, or at least a strong feeling of discomfort with the idea of approaching God. Staying in that fear guarantees that my future will be one of separation, as was my past. This is how the ego has maintained its continuity.
3. The Mind that was in Jesus and is in us is the Christ Mind, which is the Holy Spirit. T-5.I.3:3–4; T-5.I.5:1; T-5.II.10:1; T-5.IV.4:3; T-5.IV.5:6.
4. We falsely believe that if we brought our case to the Holy Spirit He would judge against us.
5. The traditional understanding is that we will be judged for our sins and suffer as we have made others suffer. To the Holy Spirit, the words mean that we give everything all the value that it has for us; we determine the return of value by our own choices about what is valuable.
6. We should give our thoughts of vengeance to the Holy Spirit, asking Him to undo the thoughts, because they do not belong in our minds.
7. “Undone,” “perish,” and “reinterpret” all contain a common meaning of “passing out of existence.” To the Holy Spirit, “the wicked shall perish” refers to the undoing of the ego, not to punishment upon sin. Notice that what is being undone is not *evil people* but *unloving thoughts*. This is precisely the distinction Jesus made when talking about the Last Judgment at the end of Chapter 2. He said there that the Last Judgment is not a time when the wicked souls perish, but rather:

It is your own perfect judgment of your own perfect creations. When everything you retain is lovable, there is no reason for fear to remain with you. (T2.VIII.5:9–10)
8. (a) He will always dismiss the case against us; He won't even consider it (“hear” it).
(b) It may seem as if there is an airtight case that proves our guilt, but it is not airtight to God. We “fools” can't overthrow the case, but He can.
9. Jesus does not see us as guilty, although we may be delaying our awakening, and he asks us to show the same patience with our brothers (“patience towards the Sonship”). In a way, the patience we exhibit toward others will generate patience with ourselves. Patience actually produces better results than impatience, and “infinite patience produces immediate effects” (12:1).