

# Study Guide and Commentary ACIM<sup>®</sup> Text, Chapter 13, Section X

## Release from Guilt Paragraphs 9–14

### Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>You who have been unmerciful to yourself [**yourselves**] do not remember your Father's Love. <sup>2</sup>And looking without mercy upon your brothers, you do not remember how much **you** love **Him**. <sup>3</sup>Yet it is forever true. <sup>4</sup>In shining peace within you is the perfect purity in which you were created. <sup>5</sup>Fear not to look upon the lovely truth in you. <sup>6</sup>Look **through** the cloud of guilt that dims your vision, and look **past** darkness to the holy place where you will see the light. <sup>7</sup>The altar to your Father is as pure as He Who raised it to Himself. <sup>8</sup>Nothing can keep **from** you what Christ would have you see. <sup>9</sup>His Will is like His Father's, and He offers mercy to every child of God, as He would have **you** do.

#### • Study Question •

1. Paragraph 9

(a) *In sentences 1 and 2, what has hid God's love for us from us, and what has hid our love for Him from us? (Compare with T-1.III.2:3,4.)*

(b) *(b) What dims our vision of the "lovely truth" in us, and what are we asked to do in regard to that "cloud?"*

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The next few paragraphs contrast the mercy of God with our harsh judgment, both of ourselves and of others, since the two go hand in hand. The ruthless judgment that fills our minds has crowded out any memory of the profundity and purity of God's Love for us (9:1). We are so callously critical of ourselves that we cannot even imagine that a being as pure as God could love us. We have such a low opinion of ourselves that we cannot hear the message of God's Love, no matter how loudly and clearly it is spoken.

Some years ago I was in a workshop when a single, short sentence moved me deeply. I don't recall exactly when or where it was, or who spoke the words, but I can remember quite clearly the effect they had on me: "Have mercy on yourself. Have *mercy* on yourself!" As I heard those words, they cut like a knife through the cords of self-judgment with which I had tied myself. I became aware, deeply aware, of how constantly and relentlessly I criticized myself and put myself down.

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The concept of being merciful toward myself simply melted me. My eyes overflowed with tears. It was as if a powerful, loving Presence were saying to me, “Allen! Oh, Allen! You’re okay. Really! You really are a lovable man. Let yourself out of the jail, Allen.” As I opened myself to that message, as the heart I had hardened toward myself melted once again, I found myself becoming aware of God’s Love for me.

Just as mercy directed toward ourselves reawakens our awareness of God’s Love for us, mercy directed toward others reawakens our awareness of our love for God (9:2). When we close our heart to God’s creations (the people around us), we close our heart to God as well. The people who seem most bitter, most judgmental of others, and most angry at their sins, often end up angry at God. “People are so awful; how could God allow this to happen?” When forgiveness enters their lives, love for God revives in their hearts.

That’s what this paragraph is about: Mercy. Compassion. The remainder of the paragraph speaks mostly about mercy toward ourselves, and recognizing the perfection of God’s creation—which is what we are. To see this light we have to brush “the cloud of guilt” aside (9:6). Christ is within us to help us find the pure altar to God that lies within each of us—a place where God is honored, loved, worshipped, and remembered. The key to finding it is accepting mercy and giving it to everyone.

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>**Release** from guilt as you would **be** released. <sup>2</sup>There is no other way to look within and see the light of love, shining as steadily and as surely as God Himself has always loved His Son. <sup>3</sup>*And as His Son loves Him.* <sup>4</sup>There is no fear in love, for love is guiltless. <sup>5</sup>You who have **always** loved your Father can have no fear, for **any** reason, to look within and see your holiness. <sup>6</sup>You **cannot** be as you believed you **were**. <sup>7</sup>Your guilt is without reason because it is not in the Mind of God, where **you** are. <sup>8</sup>And this is reason, which the Holy Spirit would **restore** to you. <sup>9</sup>He would remove **only** illusions. <sup>10</sup>All else He would have you see. <sup>11</sup>And in Christ’s vision He would show you the perfect purity that is forever within God’s Son.

### • Study Question •

#### 2. Paragraph 10

(a) *What is the only way to look within and see love?*

(b) *We have believed we were sinful and guilty, but that cannot be true. Which sentence explains why not?*

The preceding paragraph called upon us to “look upon the lovely truth” in ourselves (9:5). This paragraph tells us how we can do that. There is only one way, and that is the exercise of mercy, or in other words, the practice of forgiveness (10:1–2). Sentence 1 is a variant of the Golden Rule: “Do unto others

as you would have them do unto you.” It says that if we want to be forgiven, we need to forgive, which happens to be a message Jesus clearly implied in the words he taught us as part of the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” To me, however, the second sentence is remarkable because it flatly states “there is no other way” (10:2). If enlightenment can be said to consist in remembering the truth about our true nature, then this is a declaration that forgiveness is the *only* path to enlightenment. That’s radical!

Not only does God love us; we love Him (10:3). We were reminded of our “intense and burning love for God” earlier in the chapter (T-13.III.2:8-9). We probably are not aware of the depth and power of our love for God, but it is there, buried under our guilt and our condemnation of others. We have believed awful things about ourselves, things that the Course assures us simply are not true (10:6); therefore, there is no reason to be afraid of looking within (10:5). All we will find, if we look calmly and carefully, is love.

We all feel guilty, but the guilt is something we are making up. God does not condemn us (10:7)<sup>1</sup>; how can we condemn ourselves? Freedom from guilt is the essence of sanity, while acceptance of guilt is the essence of insanity (10:8). This is the healing the Holy Spirit would bring into our minds. Toward the end of the Text, Jesus declares that this lesson, releasing our brothers from their guilt as the path to our own freedom, is all that the Course attempts to teach us:

Can you to whom God says, "Release My Son!" be tempted not to listen, when you learn that it is you for whom He asks release? And what but this is what this course would teach? And what but this is there for you to learn? (T-31.VII.15:5-7).

## Paragraph 11

11.<sup>1</sup>You cannot enter into **real** relationships [**relationship**] with **any** of God’s Sons unless you love them all and **equally**. <sup>2</sup>Love is not special. <sup>3</sup>If you single out **part** of the Sonship for your love, you are imposing guilt on **all** your relationships and **making** them unreal. <sup>4</sup>You can love **only** as God loves. <sup>5</sup>Seek not to love **unlike** Him, for there **is** no love apart from His. <sup>6</sup>Until you recognize that this is true, you will have no idea **what love is like**. <sup>7</sup>No one who condemns a brother can see **himself** as guiltless ~~and~~ in the peace of God. <sup>8</sup>If he is guiltless and in peace and sees it not, he is delusional, and has not looked upon himself. <sup>9</sup>To him I say:

*<sup>10</sup>Behold the Son of God, and look upon his purity and be still. <sup>11</sup>In quiet look upon his holiness, and offer thanks unto his Father that no guilt has ever touched him.*

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<sup>1</sup> "God does not forgive because He has never condemned" (W-pI.46.1:1).

• **Study Question** •

3. *If we see ourselves as guilty, and not in the peace of God, what solution does this paragraph offer to us?*

To love some people more than others (special love) introduces the idea of guilt into relationships, because there must be some reason that we love some people less than we love others (11:2–3). Such reasons constitute condemnation and the perception of guilt. We can only love truly when we love as God loves, and He loves everyone equally, with no hint of guilt (11:1,4). If what we are calling love is not like God’s Love—if it is special, and adjusts the amount of love given according to the amount of guilt perceived in the person, it isn’t love; it is attack masquerading as love (11:5–6).

We cannot avoid losing our peace when we are condemning someone (11:7); we even use words such as, “What you are doing upsets me.” To be upset is not to be peaceful. Condemning thoughts are attacking thoughts, whether we like to admit it or not. And when we hold attacking thoughts in our minds, we cannot avoid feeling some degree of guilt. So, at some level, when we condemn someone else, we perceive ourselves as guilty and lacking peace.

Now, the truth is that we are “guiltless in peace” as God created us (11:8). We are hallucinating when we see anything else. Since we see the opposite of the truth nearly all the time, we are, nearly all the time, delusional.

The words in italics at the end of the paragraph are words Jesus addresses to those of us suffering from the delusion of guilt and lack of peace. Notice that his first words do not address *our* guilt and upset directly; he points us to “the Son of God” (11:10). He is advising us to see our brothers and sisters as God’s creations, holy and without guilt (11:11). In other words, the problem of guilt and lack of peace in us is best addressed by seeing the innocence and holiness of those around us.

Notice how the words of the next paragraph continue in the same vein, dealing with the same subjects. In my opinion, it was an editorial mistake to break the paragraph at this point. The first five sentences, clearly, are part of the message of Jesus to those caught up in guilt’s delusion, so we will consider them in that light.

## Paragraph 12

12. <sup>1</sup>No illusion that you have ever held against him has touched his innocence in any way. <sup>2</sup>His shining purity, wholly untouched by guilt and wholly loving, is bright within you. <sup>3</sup>Let us look upon him together and love him. <sup>4</sup>For in love of him **is** your guiltlessness. <sup>5</sup>But look upon yourself, and gladness and appreciation for what you see will banish guilt forever. <sup>6</sup>I thank You, Father, for the purity of Your most holy Son, whom You have [**Thou hast**] created guiltless forever.

• Study Question •

4. *In your own words, explain sentence 4.*

Sentences 1 to 5, clearly, are part of Jesus' message to the deluded begun in 11:10. The "you" being spoken to is the person described in 11:8; the "he" being referred to is the Son of God, as represented by your brother or sister.

Try calling to mind a person whom you have recently condemned in your thoughts, for whatever reason. Think of that person, and then speak aloud 11:10-12:5, substituting that person's name where the words "he," "him," or "the Son of God" occur, and substituting "I" for "you." (Example: "No illusion that I have ever held against Robert has touched Robert's innocence.") It can be a powerful corrective to wrong thinking.

Think of this paragraph as Jesus speaking to us *about us*. Think of it also as you speaking to God about your brother. Everything said here is as true of you as it is true of your brother or sister; it is true of everyone. We are all the same in God's eyes; we are all that same, holy Son of God, whose worthiness of love is beyond question. It is an excellent practice exercise in applying the lesson of this section, that "in love of [Christ in your brother] is your guiltlessness" (12:4).

The final line of the paragraph can be understood as spoken by Jesus about each and every one of us, or it can be a line we speak about a particular brother or sister.

## Paragraph 13

13. <sup>1</sup>Like you, my faith and my belief are centered on what I treasure. <sup>2</sup>The difference is that I love *only* what God loves **with** me, and because of this I treasure you beyond the value that you set on yourself [*yourselves*], even unto the worth that God has placed upon you. <sup>3</sup>I love all that He created, and all my faith and my belief I offer unto it. <sup>4</sup>My faith in you is as strong as all the love I give my Father. <sup>5</sup>My trust in you is without limit, and without the fear that you will hear me not. <sup>6</sup>I thank the Father for your loveliness, and for the many gifts that you will let me offer to the Kingdom in honor of its wholeness that is of God.

• Study Question •

5. *Jesus, in his attitude toward us, is our example of holy relationship. Describe his attitude toward us, and tell how an awareness of this attitude affects you.*

If we want a model for the proper attitude to have in a holy relationship, we need look no further than Jesus' attitude toward us. He has complete faith in us. He never doubts our innocence. He sees us as enormously worthy because God treasures us; he gauges his assessment of us upon God's assessment of us (13:2). He refuses to see us as guilty in any way. That is how we are to behave in all of our relationships.

Again, it would be a valuable exercise for each of us to recall an individual we are in relationship with, and to repeat these words as addressed to that person. We do this, not because we actually hold such attitudes towards one another, but to stimulate and *evoke* such an attitude within ourselves. Few of us could say that our trust in *anyone* is “without limit” (13:5), for instance. Yet that is how Jesus trusts us, and it is how we will trust one another when we have become like him.

I cannot help commenting on how these words affect me as I envision Jesus himself speaking them directly to me. He says his faith in me is as strong as “all the love I give my Father.” *I* don’t have that much faith in myself! But *he* does. He says he has no fear that I will not hear him; that’s amazing! If you get nothing from this section of the Text, get this: Jesus, the perfected Son of God, has absolute faith in *you*. Let that rock you to the core.

## Paragraph 14

14. <sup>1</sup>Praise be to you who make the Father one with His Own Son. <sup>2</sup>Alone we are all lowly, but together we shine with brightness so intense that none of us alone can even think of it. <sup>3</sup>Before the glorious radiance of the Kingdom guilt melts away, and transformed into kindness will never more be what it was. <sup>4</sup>Every reaction you experience will be so purified that it is fitting as a hymn of praise unto your Father. <sup>5</sup>See only praise of Him in what He has created, for He will never cease His praise of **you**. <sup>6</sup>United in this praise we stand before the gates of Heaven where we will surely enter in our sinlessness [blamelessness]. <sup>7</sup>God loves you. <sup>8</sup>Could I, then, lack faith in you and love Him perfectly?

### • Study Question •

6. *What do you think is the meaning of the injunction in sentence 5?*

The section ends with a paean of praise, not to God, but to those of us who “make the Father one with His Own Son” (14:1). That is what forgiveness and the practice of mercy does; it unites God and His Son. Jesus is praising *us*, because we have begun to learn to be merciful to ourselves, and merciful to others. We are taking part in the end of guilt. The disappearance of guilt allows our underlying unity to come to the forefront, and the light that shines out of that union is unimaginably brilliant (14:2).

As our guilt melts away, our every reaction becomes a hymn of praise to God (14:4). To me, that means that I respond to people around me with love and mercy, instead of attack and condemnation. Mercy is our praise to God because it is the recognition of His creation in our brothers and sisters (14:5). If God loves us unconditionally, and if God loves my brother unconditionally, can I do anything less? (14:7–8).

• **Study Question** •

7. *In one or two short paragraphs, describe what seems to you to be the main message of this section. What spoke to you?*

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# Answer Key

1. Paragraph 9.
  - a. In both cases, what prevents us from seeing God's Love is our own lack of mercy, that is, our attitude of condemnation.
  - b. The cloud of guilt dims our vision. We must disregard the thoughts that arise in our minds assigning guilt to others and to ourselves, if we want to discover our true being, which is as innocent as God created it.
2. Paragraph 10.
  - a. The only way to see past our own guilt to our loving nature is to release those around us from their guilt (10:1).
  - b. Sentence 10:7.
3. The solution to our guilt and lack of peace is to look on all brothers equally, to cease condemning any of them, and to see their perfect purity. Release everyone from guilt, and we will be released.
4. By loving the Son of God as manifested in all our brothers and sisters, we release him from all guilt; since we are also the Son of God, we thus release ourselves.
5. Jesus sees the great value given to us by God in creation. Based on what he knows to be true of us, he is confident that we will respond to God's call. His faith in me greatly increases my own confidence in myself, and helps me to believe that I indeed am deserving of his faith and trust.
6. It is urging us to look on our brothers and to see their worthiness, their holiness, their innocence. Just as we "praise" an artist when we admire his paintings, we "praise" God when we love His creations.
7. Summary: In all our relationships, the focus should be, not on projecting our guilt onto others, but on releasing others from their own guilt. Guilt is insane, unjust, and unreasonable, in everyone. Releasing our brothers from their guilt, and seeing them with love, is the only way to see the light of love in ourselves.