

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 19, Section IV(B). 1–8

The Obstacles to Peace *The Second Obstacle: The Belief* *the Body is Valuable for What It* *Offers*

Legend:

Sans serif text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

Italic sans serif text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

Sans serif text = alternate or omitted material from the
Urtext

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

Remember that when the holy relationship began, peace entered, uprooting the belief in sin and replacing it. That peace is now seeking to rise up, fill every aspect of their lives, and spill out into the world. Peace is working from *within* them, trying to get out. To do so, it must flow over these obstacles. The first is the desire to get rid of peace, which is fueled by the attraction to sin and guilt.

The second obstacle, which we encounter once the first has been (at least in part) bypassed, is the belief that the body is valuable for what it offers. As I pointed out in commenting on the last paragraph of the previous section, there is a symbiotic relationship between the first two obstacles. The attraction to guilt and the desire to get rid of peace *hide* the second obstacle, this addiction to the bodily identity, from our consciousness. At the same time, it is that bodily addiction that is the foundation and *generating source* of the first obstacle. We (subconsciously) want to get rid of peace because, at some level, we recognize that to *have* peace, we must relinquish our belief in the value of the body.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹We said that peace must first surmount the obstacle of your desire to get rid of it. ²Where the attraction of guilt holds sway, peace is *not wanted*. ³The second obstacle that peace must flow across, and closely related to the first, is the belief that the body is valuable *for what it offers*. ⁴For here is the attraction of guilt *made manifest* in the body, and *seen* in it.

• Study Question •

1. *Paragraph 1* gives a brief description of the first two obstacles. They both have in common the attraction of guilt. The second obstacle is the belief that the body is valuable for what it offers, and this is said to be the attraction of guilt made manifest in the body. What do you think that means?
- A. *The attraction of guilt manifests in the body as the attraction to physical pleasure.*
 - B. *When we are attracted to guilt we also want to find an escape from guilt, and so we seek physical pleasure.*
 - C. *The second obstacle is the manifestation of the first obstacle, which was based on the attraction of guilt. And so the second obstacle is the attraction of guilt made manifest.*

The first two sentences are an excellent summary of the preceding section (IV(A)). The attraction of guilt causes us not to want peace. This is true whether we are talking about our own personal guilt, or guilt seen in others. Holding on to guilt seen in others is easier to understand than wanting to hold on to our *own* guilt. If you consider it for a moment, though, you may be able to recall some situation where you were feeling guilty about something, and someone offered you forgiveness, maybe saying something like, “It’s all right! Everyone makes mistakes,” but you replied, saying in effect, “No, it’s *not* all right! I feel really bad about it.” I know I’ve done that. Something in me just did not want to accept that I could be free of guilt about what I’d done; it didn’t seem *right*.

Maybe you feel that way about something right now!

The point Jesus has been making is that as long as you give in to guilt, within or without, “peace is not wanted” (1:2). In a nutshell, that’s the first obstacle.

The second obstacle is “closely related to the first.” It is “the belief that the body is valuable *for what it offers*” (1:3). Make a note of the way the words “for what it offers” are emphasized. Exactly what that means will be explained in the following paragraphs, but for now, just file away the fact that, whatever it means, it’s important. The final sentence begins with the word “for,” with the meaning, “because.” Why is believing that the body is valuable an obstacle, and how is that related to the First Obstacle? *Because* our attraction to guilt is “made manifest,” in that it takes on physical form in the body, and “*seen*” in it. That is, we see our attraction to guilt in the body.

We are deceiving ourselves. We believe that we value the body for all the good things it can deliver to us: pleasures, accomplishments, and so on. And we are afraid that we must give up the body, with all the wonderful things it delivers, if we accept God's peace, which comes from identifying with our identity in spirit. Saying, "I am not a body," scares us.

What we do not realize is that what the body actually delivers, and what the ego actually wants, is *guilt*. We believe we want the pleasures it offers, but the ego really wants the guilt that accompanies the pleasures! As this section goes on to explain, another thing that accompanies the pleasures of the body is *pain*. Both pain and pleasure teach us that the body is real, and if the body is real, we must be really separate from one another and from God. If a strong, healthy body is the source of my happiness, then what becomes of happiness when the body ages, or sickens, or dies? If I identify with the body, then when the body dies, *I die*. So pinning our happiness to the body delivers the gifts of guilt, pain, and death.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹This is the value that you think peace would *rob* you of. ²This is what you believe that it would dispossess, and leave *you* homeless. ³And it is this for which *you* would deny a home to peace. ⁴This "sacrifice" you feel to be too great to make, too much to ask of you. ⁵Is it a *sacrifice*, or a *release*? ⁶What has the body *really* given you that justifies your strange belief that in it lies salvation? ⁷Do you not see that this is the belief in *death*? ⁸Here is the focus of the perception of Atonement as murder [see (A) . 17 : 3]. ⁹Here is the *source* of the idea that love is fear.

• Study Question •

2. *The beginning sentences of this paragraph keep talking about "this" being the reason that you do not want peace. What is "this"?*
- A. *The attraction of guilt.*
 - B. *The body's valuable offerings.*
 - C. *The desire to get rid of peace.*
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So, what is "this...that you think peace would *rob* you of" (2:1)? (If you have not yet read the study question above, stop reading now and try to pick the correct answer. I'll wait.)

** *

Okay. You've picked your answer, right? We think peace would rob us of the body's valuable offerings. We *like* what our bodies give us and don't want to risk losing it. This becomes quite clear when you realize that the statements made in sentences 1 through 4 are the *answers* to questions posed back in the discussion of the first obstacle:

Question: What seems to be the cost you are so unwilling to pay? (A.2:3)

Answer: This is the value that you think peace would rob you of [the cost it would make you pay]. (B.2:1)

Question: What do you think that it must dispossess to dwell with you? (A.2:2)

Answer: This is what you believe that it would dispossess, and leave you homeless. (B.2:2)

Question: Why would you want peace homeless? (A.2:1)

Answer: And it is this for which you would deny a home to peace. (B.2:3)

Each question is asking, “Why do you want to get rid of peace?” (The first obstacle). And the answer to each question is, “because you value the body for what it offers” (the second obstacle). This is what was symbolized back in IV(A). 2:4 as “the little barrier of sand” and “a wall of dust” in IV(A).2:9. By identifying with our bodies, we are identifying with our separateness, but more than that: we are identifying with “the attraction of guilt made manifest in the body.” As we’ve already said, we *think* we want the body’s pleasures, but the ego wants the guilt, and ultimately, *this* is what causes us to want to get rid of peace.

Giving up the body seems to be a sacrifice “too great to make, too much to ask of you” (2:4). Note the quotes around “sacrifice,” though. They indicate that, to Jesus at least, giving up the body is really no sacrifice at all. We do balk at the idea, though; for most of us, it *does* seem a little too much!

But, Jesus suggests, far from being a *sacrifice*, it is a *release* (2:5)! It reminds me of the channeled entity, Emmanuel, who once said death (departure from the body) is “like taking off a tight shoe.” It’s a release! We sigh with relief when it is done, when the body no longer limits our spirit, when we let go of the insane cycle of seeking bodily pleasure and increasing guilt in the process.

But I don’t believe Jesus is speaking about death here. Rather, I think he is asking us to give up the body in the sense of attempting to find happiness and satisfaction *from the body*. He asks us what we think it has given us. Nothing the body has given us can justify our “strange belief” that it can somehow save us, or that the death of Jesus’ body can bring salvation (2:6).

Our misplaced faith in the body is the root of the religious belief in salvation through the execution of Jesus ((A).17:3). Our faith in the body indirectly leads to our belief that God, the God of love, is a fearful being who kills those who offend Him.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The Holy Spirit’s messengers are sent far beyond the body, calling the mind to join in holy communion and be at peace. ²Such is the message that I gave them for you [**Ur: them, for you**]. ³It is only the messengers of *fear* that see the body, for they look for what can suffer. ⁴Is it a sacrifice to be *removed* from what can suffer? ⁵The Holy Spirit does not *demand* you sacrifice the hope of the body’s pleasure; it *has* no

hope of pleasure. ⁶But neither can it bring you fear of pain. ⁷Pain is the *only* “sacrifice” the Holy Spirit asks, and this He *would* remove.

• **Study Question** •

3. *Why do the Holy Spirit's messengers look past the body and why does He ask you to give it up and why is this not a sacrifice?*
- A. *Because pleasure is sinful.*
 - B. *Because the body can suffer.*
 - C. *Because most bodies these days are overweight.*
 - D. *Because the body is so naughty.*
 - E. *A and D.*

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The Holy Spirit's messengers of love bypass the body, addressing the mind, and calling it to “holy communion” and “peace” (3:1). The message they carry is communion and peace, a message sent from Jesus to us (3:2).

I never thought about it before, but if “I am not a body,” then certainly the Holy Spirit does not see a body when He looks at me, and when I look with the vision of Christ, I will not mistake the body for the person, either. Only fear's messengers see the body (3:3)! Fear's messengers are looking “for what can suffer” (3:3), and of the two, body and spirit, only the body can suffer. To be released from the body is to be released from pain; how could *that* be considered a sacrifice (3:4)?

It isn't that we are being asked or required to give up anything *real*. Seeking pleasure through the body is a dead end—literally. It leads to death, not to real pleasure (3:5). But as it cannot bring real pleasure, “neither can it bring you fear of pain” (3:6). “My body is a wholly neutral thing” (W-pII.294.title).¹

Once again there are quotation marks around the word “sacrifice” in 3:7. We tend to think that giving our lives to God and to divine purpose in the world will ask some great sacrifice of us, especially the “sacrifice” of bodily pleasures. But the only thing we are asked to give up is *pain*, and *that* clearly is no sacrifice but a release (3:7).

¹ It is worthwhile reading the entire lesson this comes from (254), because it spells out quite clearly just what an appropriate attitude toward our bodies would look like:

My body is a wholly neutral thing.

1. ¹ I am a Son of God. ² And can I be another thing as well? ³ Did God create the mortal and corruptible? ⁴ What use has God's beloved Son for what must die? ⁵ And yet a neutral thing does not see death, for thoughts of fear are not invested there, nor is a mockery of love bestowed upon it. ⁶ Its neutrality protects it while it has a use. ⁷ And afterwards, without a purpose, it is laid aside. ⁸ It is not sick nor old nor hurt. ⁹ It is but functionless, unneeded and cast off. ¹⁰ Let me not see it more than this today; of service for a while and fit to serve, to keep its usefulness while it can serve, and then to be replaced for greater good.

2. ¹ My body, Father, cannot be Your Son. ² And what is not created cannot be sinful nor sinless; neither good nor bad. ³ Let me, then, use this dream to help Your plan that we awaken from all dreams we made.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Peace is extended from you only to the eternal, and it reaches out *from* the eternal in *you*. ²It flows across all else. ³The second obstacle is no more solid than the first. ⁴For you want neither to get rid of peace [first obstacle] nor *limit* it [behind the wall of the body—the second obstacle]. ⁵What are these obstacles that you would interpose between peace and its going forth but barriers you place between your will and its accomplishment? ⁶You *want* communion, *not* the feast of fear. ⁷You *want* salvation, *not* the pain of guilt. ⁸*And you want your Father, not* a little mound of clay [the body], to be your home. ⁹In your holy relationship is your Father's Son. ¹⁰He [the Son] has *not* lost communion with Him [the Father], *nor with himself*. ¹¹When you agreed to join your brother, you acknowledged this is so. ¹²This has *no* cost, but it *has* release from cost.

• Study Question •

4. Please list all the things this paragraph says that you may think you want, but you don't really want.

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Our bodies are temporal, things of time; we might use the word “temporary.” Our spirits, however, are eternal. When peace is extended from us, it extends from the eternal in us to the eternal in others (4:1). Peace “flows across all else” (4:2), including our bodies. Our desire to get rid of peace cannot block its flow, nor can our belief that the body is valuable for what it offers—the first two obstacles (4:3–4). Why? Because we do not *truly* want to get rid of peace or limit it by our bodies. Our true will is to have peace, and to share it, and the obstacles are actually blocking our own will (4:5).

We don't want the “feast of fear” offered by the savage dogs; we want the “communion” brought by love (4:6). Who we are in our true nature does not really want guilt, either, which only causes pain; we want salvation. We want release (4:7). And we want to live our life in God—not in the fragile, pitiful “lump of clay” that is our body (4:8).

A holy relationship has, at its heart, “your Father's Son” (4:9). Beneath the surface layer of ego lives the perfect Son of God, whose will is one with the Father's will. As the Apostle Paul wrote, this is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27).

This is the truth of us, the Self that is still in perfect communion with God and with itself. In our conscious minds we may have lost touch with God and with our own reality, but there is something in us all that has *never* lost touch in that way. That part of us is surging up, out of the unconscious, into our consciousness now. Joining in a holy relationship, in common purpose, was an acknowledgement of this truth, whether or not we realized it (4:11). It is a realization that costs nothing and frees us from every thought of sacrifice (4:12).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹You have paid very dearly for your illusions, and *nothing* you have paid for brought you peace. ²Are you not *glad* that Heaven cannot *be* sacrificed, and sacrifice cannot *be* asked of you? ³There *is* no obstacle that you can place before our union, for in your holy relationship I am there *already*. ⁴We will surmount all obstacles *together*, for we stand *within* the gates and not outside. ⁵How easily the gates are opened from within, to let peace through to bless the tired world! ⁶Can it be difficult for us to walk past barriers together, when you have *joined* the limitless? ⁷The end of guilt is in your hands to give. ⁸Would you stop now to *look* for guilt in ~~your brother~~ **[each other]**?

• Study Question •

5. *Paragraph 5* contains a moving description of us being joined with Jesus inside the gates, and pushing them open from within and letting peace flow through to bless the world. He says this has already happened. How can this be?
- A. He is speaking to Helen, who did join with him in this way.
 - B. He is speaking to someone in a relationship in which both people have become extremely advanced spiritually.
 - C. When a holy relationship is formed, he joins in this way with the two people on an unconscious level.
 - D. He is talking about a joining that will eventually result from the holy relationship.

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In the midst of confronting all of our obstacles, it's refreshing to be reminded that, though they appear to be formidable, they really can't withstand the divine within us. When we stop to think what our illusions have cost us—guilt, sickness, loss of all kinds, absence of any profound union with one another, living in constant mistrust and fear, without the Presence of God—and the fact that, despite these seemingly incredible costs, *none* of the illusions that we have bought with them have brought us peace, we must rejoice that all of it *has* been illusion! “Heaven cannot *be* sacrificed, and sacrifice cannot *be* asked of you” (5:1–2). The impression we have of sacrifices being asked is really just another illusion.

Our obstacles cannot prevent our union with God and Christ, because we are *already* one (5:3). We *reside together* with Christ within this Oneness, and it is from the vantage point of this union that, together with Him, we overcome all the obstacles and extend peace to all the world (5:4–5). We have a divine, internal ally. This makes it easy for us to “walk past barriers together” (5:6).

What is the gift we have to offer to our brother, or to our sister, and to the world? “The end of guilt” (5:7). Clearly we are offering forgiveness. We have it in our power to *end guilt*! We are being called to see each other without guilt. With the possibility of

bringing such welcome deliverance to one another, why would we “stop now to *look* for guilt in each other?” (5:8)

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Let me be to you the symbol of the *end* of guilt, and look upon your brother as you would look on me. ²Forgive me all the sins you think the Son of God committed. ³And in the light of your forgiveness he will remember who he is, and forget what never was. ⁴I ask for your forgiveness, for if *you* are guilty, so must I be. ⁵But if I surmounted guilt and overcame the world, you were *with* me. ⁶Would you see in me the symbol of guilt or of the *end* of guilt, remembering that what I signify to you you see within *yourself*?

• Study Question •

6. *No question for this paragraph, just an exercise. If you will, simply call to mind a "sin" that someone close to you committed in your eyes. And instead of trying to forgive that person for this supposed sin, forgive Jesus for it (since we are all one, if anyone is guilty, Jesus is too). Then realize that the person who supposedly committed it is just as forgivable as Jesus.*
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Instead of seeing Jesus as the symbol of our guilt, nailed to the cross, he asks us to see him as the symbol of the *end* of guilt, and to see our brother or sister exactly as we see him (6:1).

I have a fairly high view of Jesus. I see him as the epitome of a human expression of the divine. So, when I am asked to see another “ordinary” human being just as I see Jesus, that blows my mind. And yet, I’ve come to understand that is exactly what Jesus came to teach us! He insists that he is not superior to any of us, that we all have the same gift of divine nature that he has.

Jesus here is asking us to forgive *him* for “all the sins you think the Son of God [that is, your brother or sister, partner in your relationship] committed” (6:2). When you and I are able to offer such forgiveness to another person, it enables them to remember the truth about themselves (6:3).

Instead of being the stand-in for our punishment, Jesus is offering himself as the stand-in for our forgiveness. Jesus represents the truth about your brother or sister; he has revealed who they really are. So if you are holding some grievance against someone, you are in fact holding it against Jesus, and thus also against yourself (6:4). Seen that way, it becomes fairly easy to let go of the grievance.

When you see something in another person that you judge as “sin” or evil, something you believe needs forgiveness or even exceeds the possibility of forgiveness, imagine transferring that judgment to Jesus. Say, then, to Jesus, that you forgive him for the sin you think that person committed, because Jesus represents who they really are. Imagine the effect that can have!

How could you believe this guilt belongs to Jesus? If you cannot believe it about him, you cannot believe it about anyone, because he is what everyone is. He “surmounted guilt and overcame the world,” and if that is true of him it is also true of you (6:5).

The key thought that makes all this clear (at least to me) is in the final sentence: “...what I signify to you you see within *yourself*” (6:6). Do you choose to see Jesus as the symbol of guilt, or the symbol of the *end* of guilt? If we realize that we see ourselves as we see him, the choice will be easy.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹From your holy relationship truth proclaims the truth, and love looks on itself. ²Salvation flows from deep within the home you offered to my Father and to me. ³And we are there together, in the quiet communion in which the Father and the Son are joined. ⁴O come ye faithful to the holy union of the Father and the Son in *you!* ⁵And keep *you* not apart from what is offered you in gratitude for giving peace its home in Heaven. ⁶Send forth to all the world the joyous message of the end of guilt, and all the world will answer. ⁷Think of your happiness as everyone offers you witness of the end of sin, and shows you that its power is gone forever. ⁸Where can guilt be, when the belief in sin is gone [guilt comes from sin]? ⁹And where is death, when its great advocate [guilt] is heard no more?

• Study Question •

7. How do we “keep not apart” from “the holy union of the Father and the Son in you”? How do we join with this place within us (there may be more than one right answer)?
- A. By letting go the obstacles to peace.
 - B. By not thinking that giving up the body's offerings is a sacrifice.
 - C. By sacrificing the happiness that comes from physical pleasure.
 - D. By accepting our rightful punishment for our sins.

As we practice these things within a holy relationship, “truth proclaims the truth, and love looks on itself” within that relationship (7:1). The relationship becomes a lighthouse, a fountain from which salvation flows forth to the world (7:2).

In the quiet center that is within us all, we are joined in quiet communion with the Father and the Son. In a play on the words of the Christmas carol that calls us to come to Bethlehem to worship the baby Jesus, the Course calls, “O come ye faithful to the holy union of the Father and the Son in *you!*” (7:4). This is the place from which salvation flows forth. This is where we are empowered to forgive the world.

Jesus urges us not to forget to forgive *ourselves* as we offer peace to all the world (7:5). We are called—we *all* are called—to “send forth...the joyous message of the end of guilt,” and, as all the world hears the message, “all the world will answer” (7:6). They

will return the message of “the end of sin” (7:7). They will demonstrate to us that the power of sin “is gone forever.”

Imagine what it would be like to liberate the world from all guilt. John Lennon wrote, “Imagine all the people living life in peace.” That’s what freedom from guilt would bring about. No sin means no guilt. No guilt means no death. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’” (1 Corinthians 15:54–55 ESV)

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Forgive me your illusions, and release me from punishment for what I have *not* done. ²So will *you* learn the freedom that I taught by teaching freedom to your brother, and so releasing me. ³I am within your holy relationship, yet you would imprison me behind the obstacles you *raise* to freedom, and bar my way to *you*. ⁴Yet it is not possible to keep *away* One Who is there *already*. ⁵And *in* Him it *is* possible that our communion, where we are joined *already*, will be the focus of the new perception that will bring light to all the world, contained in *you*.

• Study Question •

8. *When this paragraph talks about releasing Jesus, what can that mean? No one can really victimize someone else, and, after all, Jesus has supposedly already been released.*
- A. *It means releasing our image of him from the illusion of sin that we placed on him by making him the symbol of our sins.*
 - B. *It means letting go of the obstacles to peace so that he can flow out from our holy relationship and reach the world.*
 - C. *It means releasing him in that we are in a sense keeping him from passing through the gates of Heaven.*
 - D. *A and B*
 - E. *All of the above.*

And so, once again, Jesus asks our forgiveness, but notice what we are forgiving: *our own illusions* (8:1)! We are forgiving what never was, we are releasing him from punishment for what he has *not* done. Our brothers and sisters are no more guilty than he is, and by forgiving them, we *are* forgiving him (8:2).

Jesus has become a symbol of the world’s guilt. The traditional teaching is that our guilt is so terrible that the only way to atone for it was for God to put to death His own perfect Son. Jesus symbolizes God’s condemnation of the entire human race. Now, when Jesus asks to enter our lives and to work with us to bring peace to the entire world, we are

annoyed. We feel imposed on. We feel we are being asked to abandon our secure little lives, stop having fun, and to take on some onerous task.

But we have made up that image of him! It is our own *illusions* about him that we are letting go of. We see him that way because *we* (not God) have laid guilt on the entire world, and if we let go of that illusion about him, we will at the same time let go of our illusion about the world's guilt. To forgive him is to forgive the world; to forgive the world is to forgive him.

Within our holy relationship, Jesus lives, longing to be free to extend and expand to include the world, but we are blocking the way with our foolish barriers to peace (8:3). In attempting to keep him from the world we are keeping him from ourselves. But we cannot actually keep him out because he is “there *already*” (8:4). We are “joined *already*” with him, with the Holy Spirit; there is no guilt that has separated us from them. If we can see that and acknowledge it, our perception of everyone and everything in the world will shift, enabling us to shine forth the light of guilt's end to all the world (8:5).

Answer Key

1. A
2. B
3. B
4. Get rid of peace
limit peace
feast of fear
pain of guilt
body as home
obstacles to peace
5. C
6. No written answer expected.
7. A,B
8. D