

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 25

The Holy Spirit's Justice

Section VIII

Justice Returned to Love

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

PRELUDE TO SECTIONS VIII, IX and X: THE MEANING OF JUSTICE

The word “justice” occurs 26 times in this Section VIII; the next most common word is “love” (13x), followed by vengeance (10x). In fact, the remainder of this chapter is all about the Course’s concept of justice; the word occurs 58 times in Sections VIII, IX, and X. Interestingly enough, these sections contrast two views of justice: the world’s view, *retributive* justice, which is vengeance, and God’s view, *distributive* justice, which is love.

It may be giving away the ending, so to speak, but I think it would be useful before diving into these sections to read Robert Perry’s definition of “justice” in his Course glossary. With this definition in mind, the force of the Course’s argument in favor of its definition of justice as love may be more easily understood:

The Glossary defines justice as:

“A principle which gives love and forgiveness to everyone with complete impartiality and without limit, which gives no punishment and asks no penalty. This is true fairness because no one has broken God's laws. Everyone is still the Son of God, still innocent. Thus, the miracle is everyone's just due.... The world's justice is really injustice. It is simply a justification for attack, and all attack is unjust. It also makes us believe that God's Love is separate from His justice, which makes Him seem fearful.”

You may also want to read over Section 19 of the *Manual for Teachers*, “What is Justice?”

Overview of Section VIII

This section is all about the power to forgive, to forgive others and to forgive yourself, which are one and the same thing. It stresses that we, in ourselves, cannot do it. Our minds are so twisted by the ego that we think “justice” means vengeance when in reality justice means love. But we have the Holy Spirit within, who grants us the power to forgive if we are willing to place each situation in His hands, asking Him to show us the way.

Paragraph 1

The Holy Spirit can use all that you give to Him for your salvation. ²But He cannot use what you withhold, for He cannot take it from you without your willingness. ³For if He did, you would believe He wrested it from you against your will. ⁴And so you would not learn it is your will to be without it. ⁵You need not give it to Him wholly willingly, for if you could, you had no need for Him. ⁶But this He needs: that you prefer He take it than that you keep it for yourself alone, and recognize that what brings loss to no one you would not know.¹ ⁷This much is necessary to add to the idea no one can lose for you to gain. ⁸And nothing more.

• Study Question •

1. (1:1). *What have you read recently (in Section VI) that speaks of how the Holy Spirit can use for our salvation anything we have made, if we give it to Him?*

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The section begins with an appeal for total commitment, the choice to give everything to the Holy Spirit so that He can use it for your salvation. First, Jesus makes the obvious point that, although the Holy Spirit can use *anything* that you give Him (regardless of how we think the ego has corrupted it, or how “sinful” it seems to be), the Holy Spirit cannot use anything we hold back and *refuse* to give to Him (1:1–2). The Holy Spirit cannot take anything from you unless you are willing to give it (1:2)!

The reason is obvious. If the Spirit were to take something you did not want Him to take, you would feel violated (1:3). It would be a violation of your self in the same class as theft or rape. Your experience would be that *your will* had been ignored and crushed by the Spirit doing *His* will. It would reinforce your belief (a belief common to all of us) that your will and God’s are *not the same*, when the whole point of what the Holy Spirit is attempting to teach us is that our will is identical with His, and that we truly *want* to give Him everything (1:4). We just don’t know it!

¹ In other words, we need to recognize our resistance to the idea that no one can lose (“would not know” means “don’t want to know”). Then we can desire that the Holy Spirit take this resistance away from us. And only then can we realize that it is our will to be without this resistance, that we want only what brings loss to no one.

At first this may seem to pose an insoluble problem. If He cannot take anything unless we are willing to give it, and we firmly believe that we do not want to give it up, then it would seem that He cannot help us. But there is good news: You do not have to give “*wholly willingly*” (1:5). In fact, if you were able to muster total willingness *you would not need any help!* You would have recognized and fully accepted that your will is the same as God’s. Partial willingness is enough, a simple *preference* that the Spirit take it, as opposed to holding it on to yourself alone (1:6).

For that to occur, you must recognize that you need help, and want it. You must come to recognize your mind’s resistance, and to want help in overcoming it. The latter part of 1:6 is a bit unclear the way it is worded. Check out Robert’s footnote:

In other words, we need to recognize our resistance to the idea that no one can lose (“would not know” means “don’t want to know”). Then we can desire that the Holy Spirit take this resistance away from us. And only then can we realize that it is our will to be without this resistance, that we want only what brings loss to no one.

So we can paraphrase that sentence like this: “He needs that you recognize that you don’t want to know about what brings no loss to anyone.” You are still, in some measure, clinging to the idea that some people *deserve* to lose! Once we begin to realize this tendency in ourselves, we are ready to consider that we need help. It isn’t enough to simply have the idea that “no one *can* lose for you to gain” (1:7). You must own up to your resistance to the idea. But that’s all that you need to do (1:8). Accept the idea, but recognize that you still harbor some resistance to it, and ask for help.

This is really the same concept that is behind the biblical story of the man who came to Jesus asking for healing for his son. When Jesus assured him that “all things are possible for one who believes,” the man replied, “I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:21-24).

Paragraph 2

2 Here is the only principle salvation needs. ²Nor is it necessary that your faith in it be strong, unswerving, and without attack from all beliefs opposed to it. ³You *have* no fixed allegiance. ⁴But remember salvation is not needed by the saved. ⁵You are not called upon to do what one divided still against himself would find impossible.² ⁶Have little faith that wisdom could be found in such a state of mind. ⁷But be you thankful that only little faith is asked of you. ⁸What *but* a little faith remains to those who still believe in sin? ⁹What *could* they know of Heaven and the justice of the saved?

² Matthew 12:25 (KJV): “And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.”

• **Study Question** •

2. *Although it is necessary that you have faith in the principle that no one can lose for you to gain, it is not necessary that your faith be strong and unwavering. Why not? How can your shaky faith be enough?*

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Jesus repeats what he said back in 25.VII.6:6–7:1. There, he said, “...no one loses that each one may gain. Test *everything* that you believe against this *one* requirement.” Here, he says, referring to what was just discussed in the first paragraph, “Here is the *only* principle salvation needs” (2:1). As I said before, this makes the Course very easy! You just need to learn *one idea*! If anyone is losing we are all losing, and no loss for anyone is necessary for everyone to win! This is true because we are inextricably united. We are one.

Not only can the Course be summed up in a single sentence, we are not even required to have strong and unswerving faith in the idea (2:2)! We just have to admit that we sometimes have thoughts that oppose the idea. “Unswerving faith” isn’t in our curriculum vitae as yet. We have not achieved it. “You *have* no fixed allegiance” (2:3). We are still works in progress.

Jesus, with good humor, reminds us that “salvation is not needed by the saved” (2:4). We are not being asked to do what, as yet, is impossible for us (2:5). Wobbly faith is expected! We cannot, we should not, beat ourselves up for our imperfections. Given the divided state of our minds, we aren’t expected to be full of divine wisdom *yet*, and we should not expect or try to believe otherwise (2:6). Instead, give thanks that “only a little faith is *asked* of you” (2:7). Despite all the years we’ve studied the Course, the fact is that we still do believe in sin’s reality. Sometimes we seemingly cannot help blaming ourselves or blaming one another, and believing that *some* penalty needs to be paid. How could anyone, even God, ask us for more than “a little faith” (2:8). With minds as mixed up as ours are, we cannot possibly fully understand “Heaven and the justice of the saved” (2:9).

To me, this is what the Course means by being a “happy learner” (T-14.II). “Be you content with healing” (T-13.VIII.7:1 (FIP), T-13.IX.7:1 (CE)). Don’t hold yourself up against an impossible standard of perfection. Just be thankful that you are healing, that all you need is a little faith, a little willingness. You will grow at just the right pace, and determining the pace is not up to you.

Paragraph 3

3 There is a kind of justice in salvation of which the world knows nothing. ²To the world, justice and vengeance are the same, for sinners see justice only as their punishment; perhaps sustained by someone else, but not escaped. ³The laws of sin demand a victim. ⁴*Who* it may be makes little difference. ⁵But death must be the cost, and must be paid. ⁶This is not justice, but insanity. ⁷Yet how could justice be defined *without* insanity where love means hate, and death is seen as victory and triumph over eternity and timelessness and life?

• Study Question •

3. (3:3–6). *These lines continue the description of the world's thinking ("To the world..." in 3:2) about justice. Can you think of some ways, both in practical terms and in the teaching of the Course, that who pays for a "crime" makes little difference, or examples of the world's view about what justice is?*

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Now we begin to discuss the true meaning of "justice," "a kind of justice...of which the world knows nothing" (3:1).

The world's conception of justice is that everyone gets what is coming to them, what they deserve. Justice is virtually equated with punishment or vengeance (3:2). Like the Mikado in the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta of that name, justice means making "the punishment fit the crime." It is the Old Testament, Levitical view of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

Sentences 2, 3 and 4 all make the point that justice in the world's view requires *someone* to suffer punishment, but cares little *who* it may be. That may seem hard to credit, although if you watch many "true crime" shows on TV you will have noticed that the families of murder victims often seem willing to overlook exculpatory evidence in their desire to see *someone* punished for the crime. Even more to the point: The whole pseudo-Christian concept of "substitutionary atonement," in which Jesus died on the cross *in our place* in order to "satisfy" God's justice, is perhaps the most glaring example of this concept of retributive justice.

Ultimately, in retributive justice, in the words of the Apostle Paul, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Somebody *must* die to pay for sin. Early Christians, faced with the embarrassing fact that Jesus had been put to death as a criminal by the Romans, came up with the rather fantastic notion that this was God's plan all along. Jesus died "for our sins" (I Corinthians 15:3).

"This is not justice but insanity" (3:6). But how else would you expect justice to be defined in a world made by the ego to prove that God's will for life had been defeated by death (3:7)?

Paragraph 4

4 You who know not of justice still can ask, and learn the answer.³
²Justice looks on all in the same way. ³It is not just that one should lack for what another has. ⁴For that is vengeance, in whatever form it takes. ⁵Justice demands no sacrifice, for any sacrifice is made that sin may be preserved and kept. ⁶It is a payment offered for the cost of sin, but not the total cost. ⁷The rest is taken from another, to be laid beside your little payment to “atone” for all that you would keep and not give up. ⁸So is the victim seen as partly you, with someone else by far the greater part. ⁹And in the total cost, the greater his, the less is yours. ¹⁰And justice, being blind, is satisfied by being paid, it matters not by whom.⁴

• Study Question •

4. What question can we still “ask, and learn the answer” to?

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How else? How can justice be defined *without* insanity? The good news is that, even though you and I do not know true justice, we *can* ask that question and learn the answer (4:1).

The basic meaning of justice is that everyone gets what they deserve, impartially, without any prejudice. True justice sees everyone as equal. That being so, what they all receive must also be equal. If one person lacks because someone else *has*, that is not justice (4:2–3). If one person’s gain is another person’s loss, that is not justice. “For that is vengeance, in *whatever* form it takes” (4:4). That is what is happening when we punish someone, isn’t it? Somehow, we think their punishment can satisfy us or in some way repay us for what they have done. Vengeance; getting even.

True justice does not demand sacrifice of any kind. God’s justice could not possibly have demanded that Jesus sacrifice his life. Sacrifice or punishment does not eradicate sin, it *preserves* it. The sin is forever sin, proven to be real by the corresponding punishment, and that is precisely the ego’s intent.

The latter half of the paragraph, I believe, is based on the ego’s method of deflecting guilt by projecting it onto others. If I have “sinned” somehow, I may take a little of the

³ The concept of justice being rejected here is *retributive* justice, where those who have committed a crime are given their “just” punishment. The concept being put forward in its place is a form of *distributive* justice, which (in some forms) states that goods in a society should be allocated equally to all. This section takes distributive justice to an extreme, saying that everyone deserves the same, even in cases where retributive justice seems applicable, because everyone is God’s Son, who is sinless and deserves everything.

⁴ This is an ironic twist on the familiar image of “Lady Justice,” whose blindfold symbolizes that justice is impartial and does not favor the privileged. In the above passage, our version of justice is that it is blind to *who* pays the penalty it demands, caring only that it *is* paid. This gives us permission to privilege *ourselves* (in complete violation of the real meaning of justice being blind), so that we pay only a small part of our penalty and require another to pay the bulk.

blame and accept some small sacrifice as payment, but I will insist that the blame is not *all* mine. In part, the guilt belongs to others, maybe even most of it. This allows me to keep my unrighteous gains. I share my victimhood with someone else, and most of it goes to that someone else. The more guilt I can project onto others, the less belongs to me. The world's justice, "being blind, is satisfied by being paid, it matters not by whom" (4:6–10).

This is not at all how true justice works. In true justice, no one has less guilt because someone else has more. Justice looks on all of us without any guilt at all! True justice *is* blind, but it is blind, not to who gets the most punishment, but to the very existence of guilt.

Paragraph 5

5 Can this be justice? ²God knows not of this. ³But justice does He know, and knows it well, for He is wholly fair to everyone. ⁴Vengeance is alien to His Mind *because* He knows of justice. ⁵To be just is to be fair and not be vengeful. ⁶Fairness *and* vengeance are impossible, for each one contradicts the other and denies that it is real. ⁷It is impossible for you to share the Holy Spirit's justice with a mind that can conceive of specialness at all. ⁸Yet how could He be just if He condemned a sinner for the crimes he did not do, but *thinks* he did? ⁹And where would justice be if He demanded of the ones obsessed with the idea of punishment that they lay it aside unaided, and perceive it is not true?

• Study Questions •

5. *Justice is fair, but not vengeful. The words "Fairness and vengeance are impossible" cannot mean that both fairness and vengeance are impossible; what do you think it does mean?*
6. *(5:8–10) If we conceive of specialness, we are including the entire set of ideas about sin and punishment, which are not part of the Holy Spirit's justice. A mind convinced of the validity of punishment believes in specialness; some deserve punishment, some don't, some deserve more. What does the Holy Spirit, in His justice, not expect or demand of such minds (like our own)?*

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This whole notion of parcelling out blame, offloading my guilt by laying it onto you, cannot possibly be justice. God knows nothing of it (5:1–2), and for this reason the idea that we can escape our damnation because Jesus bore our blame is simply impossible.

God *does* know justice, though, "and knows it well, for He is wholly fair to everyone" (5:3). This is *distributive* justice instead of *retributive* justice, or vengeance, which is alien to God's Mind (5:4).

But what about the Bible's statement, "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord"?¹ Let's face it: In the Bible, God is often depicted as exercising vengeance and punishing sin. In the

Old Testament God is said to have ordered the Hebrews to annihilate every non-Hebrew man, woman and child in the “promised land.” What we must realize is that the Bible is not God’s words written down by men, but rather the thoughts of men *about* God. And those ideas evolved over the centuries just as humanity has evolved over the centuries. We have outgrown the idea of a vengeful God. When you study the life and words of Jesus, you get a completely different picture of God, and that understanding of God is what is being shared here in the Course.

To be just is to be fair, not vengeful (5:5). Only one of these can be true, because we are all equal. No one is special. Therefore, no one gets special treatment, positive or negative (5:6). If your mind accepts specialness in the slightest degree you cannot possibly see justice from the Spirit’s point of view (5:7).

God does not see sin in you or in me. Or in anyone. We may *think* we have sinned, but surely God will not punish us for crimes we only *think* we have done, but in fact did not do (5:8). That would be completely unjust.

Nor would it be just to demand of us, who are “obsessed with the idea of punishment,” to lay aside all our ideas of punishment without divine assistance (5:9). This takes us back to the first paragraphs of the section, where we were told that the Spirit will not try to take anything from us against our will, not even our obsession with punishment. We need to acknowledge our tendency to cling to justice as vengeance, but to be willing to have it removed. “You are *not* called upon to do what one divided still against himself *would* find impossible” (2:5). Don’t worry that God expects you to magically transform into a saint, viewing everyone with nothing but love, overlooking every sin or slight, great or small. Is that the goal? Yes; of course. But divine aid is with us to help us get there.

Paragraph 6

6 It is extremely hard for those who still believe sin meaningful to understand the Holy Spirit’s justice. ²They believe He shares their own confusion and cannot avoid the vengeance that their own belief in justice must entail.⁵ ³And so they fear the Holy Spirit and perceive the wrath of God in Him. ⁴They are unjust indeed to Him. ⁵Nor can they trust Him not to strike them dead with lightning bolts torn from the fires of Heaven by God’s Own angry hand. ⁶They *do* believe that Heaven is hell and *are* afraid of love. ⁷And deep suspicion and the chill of fear come over them when they are told that they have never sinned. ⁸Their world depends on sin’s stability. ⁹And they perceive the “threat” of what God knows as justice to be more destructive to themselves and to their world than vengeance, which they understand and love.

⁵. “Cannot avoid the vengeance” means they believe the *Holy Spirit* cannot avoid enacting the vengeance that their notion of justice entails.

• **Study Question** •

7. *In what ways does your world “depend on sin’s stability” and seem threatened by “what God knows of justice”?*
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This section explains why it would be unjust for God to expect us to give up our belief in just punishment without divine help. As long as you believe that sin is real, it’s “extremely hard” to see how overlooking it is just (6:1). I think we’ve all experienced this. How often in Course groups, when discussing forgiveness, do the examples come up such as, “What about Hitler?”, “What about mass murderers?”, or “What about parents who sexually abuse their own children?” We may have our own personal examples of people we simply can’t seem to forgive. How can you forgive *them*? To let such people off the hook simply does not seem fair.

Generally, if someone believes in the reality of sin and also believes in God (and the two go together frequently), they will believe that *God* also thinks of justice as vengeance (6:2). “God will get you for that!” “AIDS is God’s punishment for homosexuality.” As a result of such beliefs, people end up *afraid of the Holy Spirit*, and see Spirit as the executor of God’s wrath. They are actually afraid to put their lives into God’s hands for fear they will be snuffed out (6:3–5). Many sincere Christians still live in fear of the Last Judgment or the Great Tribulation, afraid they will be “left behind” while the “good” people get “raptured.” They end up believing that to be in God’s Presence (Heaven) is hell, and are actually afraid of love, afraid that somehow to be loving is to be in danger (6:6).

They even experience a “chill of fear” if anyone suggests that there is no such thing as sin, and that “they have *never* sinned” (6:7). Why? I think it is because their whole understanding of the world is based on the concept of “just punishment” for sin (6:8); the evil-doers *must* be punished. Indeed, their own self-concept is based on the reality of sin. How could something like the ego even *exist* if separation from God is impossible? It could not! So God’s justice—what God *knows* as justice—is perceived as a threat, “more destructive to themselves and to their world than vengeance, which they understand and love” (6:9).

Take a moment to examine your own feelings and thoughts about the idea that there is no sin, and no punishment. How do you feel about the notion that every person in your life, every person you have ever known and perhaps hated or despised or harshly judged, *even those persons* are still loved by God, still seen by God as wholly innocent?

Paragraph 7

7 So do they think the loss of sin a curse, and flee the blessing of the Holy Spirit as if He were a messenger from hell, sent from above in treachery and guile to work God's vengeance on them in the guise of a deliverer and friend. ²What could He be to them except a devil, dressed to deceive within an angel's cloak?⁶ ³And what escape has He for them, except a door to hell that seems to look like Heaven's gate? ⁴Yet justice cannot punish those who ask for punishment but have a Judge Who knows that they are wholly innocent in truth. ⁵In justice He is bound to set them free, and give them all the honor they deserve and have denied themselves because they are not fair and cannot understand that they *are* innocent.

• Study Question •

8. *Recall that the last two paragraphs (as well as the next one) are part of an ongoing explanation of why we find it hard to understand the Holy Spirit's justice (6:1), and why the Holy Spirit does not expect us to lay aside the idea of punishment without help. How would you summarize the message of these two paragraphs in one or two sentences?*
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If anyone holds on to the idea that the concept of sin has some value, they will view the *loss* of sin as a curse. They will literally run away from the Holy Spirit. They will be sure that God's total forgiveness must be some kind of treacherous trick, and the Holy Spirit some sort of spiritual scam artist trying to trick you, to suck you in with false promises in order to torture you in hell (7:1,3). When we value sin, we tend to think the Holy Spirit is the devil in disguise (7:2).

This probably seems extreme to you. You may be thinking, "I certainly don't fear the Holy Spirit and run away from Him. Maybe some people do, but not me." But is that true? Do you joyfully receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit? Do you happily accept His message that you are the holy Son of God Himself, that there is no sin, that sin has no consequence? Or do you continue to beat yourself up with guilt? Do you continue to lay guilt on others? Could it be that, while you profess one thing your actions betray that you believe something else?

God's justice cannot punish you, nor anyone else, because we have a divine Judge, the Holy Spirit, Who not only believes in our innocence but *knows* we are "wholly innocent in truth" (7:4). Because we are totally innocent, the Judge has no choice but to set us free, and to honor us with the honor we've been denying to ourselves. In our egos we are unfair and incapable of understanding our own innocence (7:5), but—thank God!—we have the Holy Spirit Who is wholly fair and knows our innocence.

⁶ 2 Corinthians 11:14 (RSV): "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light." In the above passage, those who believe in sin see the Holy Spirit in this way, as a devil disguised as an angel to trick them into welcoming Him.

Paragraph 8

8 Love is not understandable to sinners, because they think that justice is split off from love and stands for something else. ²And thus is love perceived as weak and vengeance strong. ³For love has lost when judgment left its side and is too weak to save from punishment, but vengeance without love has gained in strength by being separate and apart from love. ⁴And what *but* vengeance now can help and save, while love stands feebly by with helpless hands, bereft of justice and vitality, and powerless to save? ⁵What can Love ask of you who think that all of this is true? ⁶Could He in justice and in love believe, in your confusion, you *have* much to give?

• Study Question •

9. *What is the “something else” (8:1) we believe justice stands for?*

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By and large, if we still believe that we are sinful, we will think that justice is something completely different from love. We cannot understand that love *is* justice, and that justice *is* love (8:1). If someone treats their enemies with love we think they are being weak; if, on the other hand, someone takes vengeance on those they perceive as enemies, we think they are being strong (8:2). If the sin we perceive is real, love has no role to play, no power to save; we have to turn to vengeance (8:2–4).

If our minds are so confused, so mixed up about the strength of love and its power to heal, so convinced that sin demands punishment, there is not much that God can ask of us. God is realistic. He knows that we are incapable of contributing very much to our own healing (8:5–6).

Paragraph 9

9 You are not asked to trust Him far; no further than what you see He offers you, and what you recognize you could not give yourself. ²In God's Own justice does He recognize all you deserve, but understands as well that you cannot accept it for yourself. ³It is His special function to hold out to you the gifts the innocent deserve. ⁴And every one that you accept brings joy to Him *as well* as you. ⁵He knows that Heaven is richer made by each one you accept. ⁶And God rejoices as His Son receives what loving justice knows to be his due. ⁷For love and justice are not different. ⁸*Because* they are the same does mercy stand at God's right hand and give the Son of God the power to forgive himself of sin.⁷

• Study Question •

10. *What is the special function of the Holy Spirit that is discussed here?*

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Because the Spirit knows we are all slightly insane, confused, suspicious, and resistant, we are not being asked to give much—just a little trust in the very evident things the Spirit does offer to us, such as forgiveness and guidance, with a wisdom and compassion that clearly exceeds our own (9:1). He knows the totality of what is truly our right based on what we are, but He also knows full well we are unable to accept it all for ourselves (9:2). His function is to offer us all of that. He rejoices any time we actually *receive* an offered gift (9:3–4), because each gift we accept enriches all of Heaven (9:5).

Every time we accept that we deserve divine blessing, and receive the gift, we rejoice, the Holy Spirit rejoices, Heaven is enriched, and *even God Himself* rejoices when we willingly accept what we are entitled to, what His justice *knows* we deserve (9:6). Note the emphasis on “knows.” It's not just someone's opinion, not even God's opinion; God *knows* it. There can be no question of something that God *knows*.

He knows our worthiness because love and justice are the same thing, not different (9:7). Justice determines what we merit and what we do not, justice gives us what we deserve, but in God's case, justice *is* love. Therefore, what we deserve is all that God's infinite love wills to give us! That is why “mercy stand[s] at God's right hand,” in the

⁷ In the Bible, the right hand of God symbolizes the exercise of His power and authority, often used to destroy. Thus, Psalm 98:1 (KJV) says, “His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.” And Lamentations 2:4 (KJV) says, “He stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire.” The right hand of God also represents the place of honor next to God. Thus, the New Testament speaks of Jesus Christ as being exalted to the right hand of God (see Mark 16:19 and Acts 2:33). By saying that *mercy* stands at God's right hand, the Course is saying that mercy is joined with the power of God and also occupies the place of honor next to God. This fusion of power and mercy is what gives “the Son of God the *power* to *forgive* himself of sin” (emphasis ours).

place of power and authority, where mercy can give us each the power to forgive *ourselves* of sin (9:8). In and of our ego selves we cannot do that, but in God's mercy, God's perfect justice, the power of the Holy Spirit is ours. It may seem impossible to you to forgive yourself—and if you have a problem forgiving someone else it is *because* you have a problem forgiving yourself—, but turn in trust to the power of God's Spirit within you, and you will find the ability to do it. It may take time, but trust that it will be there. Give thanks for the power to forgive, even before you see it. That's faith, "the evidence of things not seen."

Paragraph 10

10 To him who merits everything, how can it be that *anything* is kept from him? ²For that would be injustice, and unfair indeed to all the holiness that is in him, however much he recognize it not. ³God knows of no injustice. ⁴He could not allow His Son be judged by those who seek his death and could not see his worth at all. ⁵What honest witnesses could they call forth to speak on his behalf? ⁶And who would come to plead *for* him and not against his life? ⁷No justice would be given him by you. ⁸Yet God ensured that justice *would* be done unto the Son He loves, and would protect from all unfairness you might seek to offer, believing vengeance is his proper due.

• Study Question •

11. (10:4–8). Based on what follows, who is meant by the phrase, "those who seek his death?"

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We are entitled to receive all of God's riches because of what we are.

"You are entitled to miracles because of what you are. You will receive miracles because of what God is. And you will offer miracles because you are one with God. " (W-pl.77.1:1-3 (FIP)).

"The Bible gives many references to the immeasurable gifts which are for you, but for which you must ask. This is not a condition as the ego sets conditions. It is the glorious condition of what you are" (T-4.III.5:3-5 (FIP), (T-4.V.11:4-6 (CE)).

Nothing, therefore, can be withheld from us because "that would be injustice," unfair to the holy truth of us. We may recognize that truth or we may not, but that does not affect the fact that we are *entitled* to *everything* (10:1–2). God is incapable of injustice, so He blesses us because we all deserve it (10:3).

When it says here (10:4) that God "could not allow His Son be judged by those who seek his death and *could* not see his worth at all," we may wonder what or who it is referring to. One thing that springs to mind is the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, which was rife with false witnesses (10:5), but that does not have much to do with the whole theme of our special function of forgiveness. I think it refers to all of us. In order to condemn

ourselves or to condemn another person, we have to marshal false witnesses about supposed crimes or sins. Our egos are all seeking death, our own and everyone else's. We are blind to the light of God in ourselves and others. What witnesses are possible to call to plead *for* the vindication of Christ in us, rather than *against* it? How easy it is to find fault; how difficult to see the Christ!

For *you* to judge the Son of God justly simply would not happen (10:7). Nevertheless, God has found a way to ensure “that justice *would* be done unto the Son He loves, and would protect from *all* unfairness you might seek to offer, believing vengeance *is* his proper due” (10:8).

The section ends here, leaving us hanging. What is the way that God has found to ensure that true justice *will* be done? We have solid clues already. We know He has gifted us all with the Holy Spirit, Who is the memory of God within us all. He is here to share His perception with us, since ours is so corrupted by the ego. He is within us all, ready to assist us to *be* that true witness to the sinlessness of a brother or sister. And that is the topic of the next short section, “A Witness to Sinlessness.”

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Answer Key

1. T-25.VI.7:4–5 spoke of the same idea: “All that you made can serve salvation easily and well. The Son of God can make no choice the Holy Spirit cannot employ on his behalf, and not against himself” (T-25.VI.7:4-5).
2. Shaky faith is enough if we *admit* it is shaky, and recognize our *resistance* to the idea that loss for anyone is loss for everyone. If we are honest about our imperfect faith, God can work with that.
3. In the Course’s teaching, we often use projection to transfer guilt to someone or something outside ourselves. In the world, we can find many instances of people trying to find a scapegoat for some situation, someone or something to blame and punish. Example: Hitler and the Jews. Urban decline blamed on certain ethnic groups. The usual interpretation of the Bible saying, “The wages of sin is death.” Revolutionary groups who claim they are seeking only justice (meaning vengeance). The way we use the phrase, “It’s only fair,” i.e. “I washed the dishes; it’s only fair that you dry them.” Lawsuits for large insurance payoffs. Punishing criminals. Viewing adversity as some kind of deserved punishment, bad karma.
4. What is the definition of justice? (3:7)
5. It is impossible to be both fair and vengeful at the same time; the two cannot co-exist.
6. That we lay aside the idea of punishment without any help, and by ourselves perceive that it isn’t true.
7. If I have never sinned, it implies that nobody has sinned, and therefore all the “wrongs” and “injustice” I see in the world will never be “righted” in the way I think they should. I will never be “repaid” for the wrongs done to me. If there is no “right and wrong” (which God’s justice implies since it sees everyone equally) the whole foundation of my world seems to collapse.
8. While we believe that sin and punishment are meaningful, we project this belief onto the Holy Spirit and fear that He is the instrument of God’s wrath, even though He appears like an angel offering Heaven to us, and therefore we run away in fear. He therefore does not expect us to give up the idea of sin and punishment without help.
9. Punishment, vengeance
10. To offer me the gifts that the innocent deserve, and to give me the power to forgive myself. In other words, to meet me in my confusion and weakness and to provide all that I seem to lack.
11. You. Me. Anyone who believes sin has meaning.