

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 25

The Holy Spirit's Justice

Section X

The Justice of Miracles

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

Overview of Section X

This section sums up and drives home the lesson that no one can lose for anyone to gain, that for anyone to receive forgiveness it must be given to all, and the way to give it is to receive it.

Paragraph 1

What can it be but arrogance to think your little errors cannot be undone by Heaven's justice? ²And what could this mean except that they are sins and not mistakes, forever uncorrectable, and to be met with vengeance, not with justice? ³Are you willing to be released from *all* effects of sin? ⁴You cannot answer this until you see all that the answer must entail. ⁵For if you answer yes, you mean you will forego all values of this world in favor of the peace of Heaven. ⁶Not one sin will you retain. ⁷And not one doubt that this is possible will you hold dear that sin be kept in place. ⁸You mean that truth has greater value now than all illusions. ⁹And you recognize that truth must be revealed to you, because you know not what it is.

• Study Question •

1. *In light of the previous paragraph, what are we giving reluctantly and what is the gift we are reluctant to accept?*

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We have just been told in the preceding paragraph:

You have the right to all the universe; to perfect peace, complete deliverance from all effects of sin, and to the life eternal, joyous, and complete in every way, as God appointed for His holy Son. (T-25.IX.4:1 (CE)).

That is the very definition of Heaven's justice (IX.4:2). To think that Heaven's justice *can't* give us complete deliverance from all effects of sin, which is really nothing more than our errors, is simply arrogant (1:1). When we think of our errors as "sins" we endow them with qualities of solidity and permanence. They merit punishment, not forgiveness, and certainly not with life eternal, joyous, and complete in *every* way (1:2)!

So, Jesus asks, "*Are* you willing to be released from *all* effects of sin?" (1:3). Pay attention to the emphasis on that first word. Try reading the question aloud, putting emphasis on the two italicized words. It seems to imply that, while we may think we are willing, we have hidden reservations, hidden even from ourselves. There are *some* effects of sin we do not want to be released from. We can't really answer the question, Jesus says, until we really understand how far-reaching it is, and just how much is included in that little word "all" (1:4). It means entirely giving up all the values of this world in trade for the peace of Heaven (1:5). You won't be able to hold onto one sin, one lick of guilt, whether your own or anyone else's (1:6).

Does that even seem *possible* to you? To feel no guilt whatsoever? To *see* no guilt whatsoever in anyone else? I don't think I'm at that point yet, to be honest. Jesus says that when we can truly say "Yes" to his offer of release from all effects of sin, the transformation in our minds will be so radical that "*not one dobt that this is possible*" will remain in our minds (1:7). The way this is worded implies that the reason we will doubt the possibility of total freedom from guilt is because we still want to hold on to sin in some way (our own or that of others).

Our answer of "yes" will occur when we decide that "truth has greater value...than *all* illusions" (1:8). In other words, we have become willing to stop fooling ourselves that the illusion of guilt, for instance, actually has some value; or that the illusion of being separate and "better than" others is actually worth anything. We don't actually know what the truth *is*. The only way we can possibly come to value it over illusions is to have truth *revealed* to us by the Holy Spirit (1:9). Seeing someone, anyone, as totally innocent is a miraculous shift in consciousness, in perception. That is why this is called a course in *miracles*.

Paragraph 2

2 To give reluctantly is not to gain the gift, *because you are reluctant to accept it*. 2It is saved for you until reluctance to receive it disappears, and you are willing it be given you. 3God's justice warrants gratitude, not fear. 4Nothing you give is lost to you or anyone, but cherished and preserved for you in Heaven, where all the treasures given to God's Son are kept for him¹ and offered anyone who but holds out his hand in willingness they be received. 5Nor is the treasure less as it is given out. 6Each gift received but *adds* to the supply. 7For God is fair. 8He does not fight against His Son's reluctance to see salvation as a gift from Him. 9Yet would His justice not be satisfied until it is received by everyone.

• Study Question •

2. *In light of the previous paragraph, what are we giving reluctantly and what is the gift we are reluctant to accept?*

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Our gift of seeing someone else as totally innocent has to be given willingly. Reluctance means we haven't really accepted that gift ourselves, although I think even forgiveness tempered with a little reluctance can have transformative effects *for the recipient*, if not for the giver. The giver's reluctance prevents his own reception of the gift (2:1)! Not that the gift is lost forever; it is "saved for you until reluctance to receive it disappears, and you are *willing* it be given you" (2:2).

The way true divine justice works earns our gratitude, not fear, as retributive justice does (2:3). None of this discussion of withheld gifts should elicit any fear in us, any thought that our imperfect efforts at forgiveness are wasted efforts. Far from it! There is no loss in God's justice. Everything we give is "cherished and preserved for you in Heaven" (2:4). They constitute a reservoir of grace that is offered to anyone willing to receive it, and that will include you, and me, when we are truly ready.

This is a miraculous treasure house of grace!² When it is drawn upon it is not diminished (2:5). In fact, each time anyone *takes* the gift of forgiveness from the storehouse, it *adds to the supply* (2:6)!

"God is fair" (2:7)! That fact is the reason why the storehouse works as it does. It would not be fair to *punish* us for our reluctance to receive His gifts. God in His justice wants *everyone* to receive salvation (1:9). He works things out so that His will for universal acceptance of salvation can and will be fulfilled. God is fair. No one is left out.

¹ Matthew 6:20 (RSV): "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal."

² The imagery of a storehouse or treasure house where all gifts of the Spirit are stored up for us recurs over and over in the Course. See also W-159.1:3-5.

Paragraph 3

3 Be certain any answer to a problem the Holy Spirit solves will always be one in which *no one* loses. ²And this must be true because He asks no sacrifice of anyone. ³An answer which demands the slightest loss to anyone has not resolved the problem, but has added to it and made it greater, harder to resolve, and more unfair. ⁴It is impossible the Holy Spirit could see unfairness as a resolution. ⁵To Him, what is unfair must be corrected *because* it is unfair. ⁶And every error is a perception in which one, at least, is seen unfairly. ⁷Thus is justice not accorded to the Son of God. ⁸When anyone is seen as losing, he has been condemned. ⁹And punishment becomes his due *instead* of justice.

• Study Question •

3. *The Course appears to be using a different concept of “fairness” here. Our concept of fairness is that each receives according to what he deserves, and what he deserves is based on what he has done. What do you think the concept of fairness is in this paragraph?*

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God’s fairness is why we can be certain that when the Holy Spirit solves a problem, “*no one* loses” (3:1). God isn’t asking anyone to sacrifice, to lose, and therefore His justice *must* mean that everyone gains (3:2). When any problem is answered in a way that entails loss for someone, it just makes the problem worse (3:3). We’ve seen this over and over in world history and in our individual relationships; it’s a marvel that we haven’t yet learned the lesson!

How can we even imagine that the Holy Spirit would “*see* unfairness as a resolution” (3:4)? Even in our un-evolved state of mind, something in us would cry out, “But that’s not fair!” If *you* don’t like unfairness, how can you think that *God* would tolerate it? Unfairness is what the Holy Spirit is trying to *correct* (3:5)! True perception brings complete equality, and “*every* error is a perception in which one, at least, is seen unfairly” (3:6). Surely we can understand that any perception of guilt means that we are seeing someone as less deserving of love, and that’s simply not fair if everyone is equally God’s offspring. Unfairness is *injustice* toward a Son of God (3:7).

If the supposed resolution of a problem entails loss for anyone, we have judged and condemned that person to some sort of deprivation (3:8). He or she is being punished, which is contrary to God’s justice (3:9).

Paragraph 4

4 The sight of innocence makes punishment impossible and justice sure. ²The Holy Spirit's perception leaves no grounds for an attack. ³Only a loss could justify attack, and loss of any kind He cannot see. ⁴The world solves problems in the other way. ⁵It sees a resolution as a state in which it is decided who shall win and who shall lose; how much the one shall take and how much can the loser still defend. ⁶Yet does the problem still remain unsolved, for only justice can set up a state in which there is no loser; no one left unfairly treated and deprived, and thus with grounds for vengeance. ⁷Problem solving cannot be vengeance, which at best can be another problem *added* to the first, in which the murder is not obvious.

• Study Question •

4. *Does the world's resolution really settle the matter, according to sentence 6? Why not?*

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When anyone is perceived as innocent, punishment for them is unthinkable, and justice is surely due them (4:1). When I unite with the perception of the Holy Spirit and see total innocence, there are absolutely no grounds left for an attack (4:2).

To justify any kind of vengeance (or attack), someone must have suffered loss. For instance, you took something from me; you are guilty and deserve to be punished for it. However, the Holy Spirit cannot see any kind of loss; therefore, no attack is ever justified (4:3). We have to distinguish between what is truly real or absolute reality and what appears to be real, which we can call relative reality. If you steal my car, in relative reality I've suffered loss, but in absolute reality, I have not lost anything. This may be hard to accept, but doing so is crucial to understanding divine justice.

The world operates on relative reality, and it “solves” problems like this in other ways, or what Jesus here calls “the other way,” clearly meaning there are just two possible kinds of resolution: God's, or the world's (4:4). The world's justice means determining who wins and who loses, and just how much the loser loses and the winner gains (4:5). This is the kind of justice routinely dealt out in our courts of law. A defrauded B and therefore must pay a fine and/or be imprisoned as a result. Invariably, the loser feels unfairly treated. Yes, I owed *something* but the price being exacted is too much.

The glaring example of this is not so much in the court system as in our inter-personal relationships. Most of us have been the object of someone else's judgment that felt over the top, and left us wishing we could somehow even the score (4:6). Vengeance solves nothing; it just makes things worse. It's murder dressed up as justice (4:7).

Paragraph 5

5 The Holy Spirit's problem solving is a way in which the problem ends. ²It has been solved because it has been met with justice. ³And until it has, it will recur because it has not yet been solved. ⁴The principle that justice means no one can lose is crucial to this course. ⁵For miracles *depend* on justice; not as it is seen through this world's eyes, but as God knows it, and as knowledge is reflected in the sight the Holy Spirit gives. ⁶No one deserves to lose. ⁷And what would be unjust to him cannot occur. ⁸Healing must be for everyone because he does not merit an attack of any kind. ⁹What order can there be in miracles, unless someone deserves to suffer more and others less? ¹⁰And is this justice to the wholly innocent?

• Study Question •

5. Why is the principle that no one can lose crucial to A Course in Miracles?

While vengeance *adds to* the problem (4:7), the problem is *gone* when the Holy Spirit solves it by meeting it with divine justice --which is loving impartiality for all (5:1– 2). Until true justice is accepted in any situation, separation remains, and *that is* the problem (5:3).

"The principle that justice *means* no one can lose is crucial to this course" (5:4). Crucial! It's remarkable how often the Course repeats the centrality of this principle. We were told very recently (25.VII.6:6–7:1) that everything we believe must be tested to see if it aligns with this principle. To say it is crucial means that it is all-important, critical to our success in learning the Course.

Miss this and you will not get the Course. This is a course in miracles, and "miracles *depend on justice*" (5:5). The gifts of God are for everyone (That's justice.), and we cannot say, "I am entitled to miracles" (W-77) unless we have fully embraced the concept of divine justice as impartial love. That is justice "as God knows it, and as knowledge is reflected in the sight the Holy Spirit gives" (5:5). It is when we see with the perception of the Holy Spirit, a perception based on divine justice as love, that we are able to forgive and to see the innocent Son of God in our brothers and sisters. We realize that "*No one* deserves to lose." Loss would be unjust, out of accord with justice, and "what would be *unjust* to him cannot occur" (5:6–7).

Since everyone in reality is innocent, nobody merits attack of any kind; therefore, "healing must be for everyone" (5:8). *Healing*, not punishment or vengeance. This also eliminates any concept of order in miracles (some are harder than others, or more or less deserved than others) for the simple reason that no one deserves to suffer more than anyone else (5:9). Everyone is entitled to all miracles. That is what justice means for the wholly innocent (5:10).

Paragraph 6

6 A miracle is justice. ²It is not a special gift to some, to be withheld from others as less worthy, more condemned, and thus apart from healing. ³Who is there who can be separate from salvation if its purpose is the end of specialness? ⁴Where is salvation's justice if some errors are unforgivable, and warrant vengeance in place of healing and return of peace? ⁵Salvation cannot seek to help God's Son be more unfair than *he* has sought to be. ⁶If miracles, the Holy Spirit's gift, were given specially to an elect and special group and kept apart from others as less deserving, then is He ally to specialness. ⁷What He cannot perceive He bears no witness to. ⁸And everyone is equally entitled to His gift of healing and deliverance and peace.

• Study Question •

6. *We are used to thinking that there is no order of difficulty because all sins and sicknesses are equally unreal. This paragraph and the previous one, however, presents a different rationale for why it is equally easy to heal any sickness or problem in anyone. What is it?*
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As I pointed out a moment ago, unless you embrace the divine concept of justice, you won't be able to justify miracles. "A miracle is justice" (6:1). We tend to think of a miracle as something doled out parsimoniously, something accorded only to the truly, deeply deserving, something for the select few. That is exactly what a miracle *is not* (6:2)!

The whole purpose of God's salvation is the end of specialness. Surely we all know that by now, having studied the Text. If anyone were left out, that would make two types of people, the saved and the unsaved. Two *special groups*. The whole point of salvation is the elimination of that kind of specialness. No one can be separate from salvation (6:3). Even in the Bible there are hints of this. For instance, it teaches that God's eternal purpose is "to bring ALL things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ? (Ephesians 1:10). The eternal goal is Oneness, which means no one is left out.

If some errors are unforgivable (implying that an order of difficulty in miracles must be assumed), it would mean there can be no healing and restoration of peace — just vengeance. God's salvation is left incomplete (6:4). Salvation, the end of specialness and injustice, cannot possibly *contribute* to our (God's Son's) unfairness, our value of specialness. That would be the case if miracles "were given specially to an elect and special group and kept *apart* from others as *less* deserving" (6:5–6). The Holy Spirit simply does not *see* specialness, some more deserving than others, and therefore "everyone is *equally* entitled to His gift of healing and deliverance and peace" (6:7–8).

Paragraph 7

7 To give a problem to the Holy Spirit to solve for you means that you *want* it solved. ²To keep it for yourself to solve without His help is to decide it should remain *unsettled, unresolved, and lasting* in its power of injustice and attack. ³No one can be unjust to you unless you have decided first to be unjust. ⁴And then must problems rise to block your way,³ and peace be scattered by the winds of hate. ⁵Unless you think that all your brothers have an equal right to miracles with you, you will not claim your right to them, because you were unjust to one with *equal* rights. ⁶Seek to deny, and you will feel denied. ⁷Seek to deprive, and you have been deprived.

• Study Question •

7. (7:1–4). *Think of a problem you are reluctant to give to the Holy Spirit (remember the discussion of being “reluctant” to give Him what He asks in 2:1-3), a problem that (in the words of Lesson 193) you saved to settle by yourself. Realize that the mentality that wants to solve this problem on your own is the same mentality that gave rise to the problem in the first place, and is the sole cause of any perception that you are unjustly treated. What is that mentality?*

The Course is very clear about one thing: Alone, we cannot solve any of our problems; we must give them to the Holy Spirit to solve for us. If we fail to do so, the problems “remain unsettled, unresolved, and lasting in [their] power of injustice and attack” (7:1–2). I think that we know that, but repress the knowledge and hold onto the problem because we're too attached to our egos and don't really want the problem to be solved.

There is nothing to be gained by trying to solve them by ourselves, perhaps thinking that we only need to turn them over when we cannot resolve them on our own. The point is that we can never resolve them by ourselves. The fact that we imagine that keeping ourselves apart from divine assistance will somehow result in resolving problems caused by keeping ourselves apart only shows that either we have not truly understood what the problem is, or that we don't really want it solved.

Sentence 3, on the face of it, may seem contrary to your experience. You may think of Jesus. Certainly, he did not decide to be unjust, and yet no one could be a better example of someone who was treated unjustly, at least as we perceive it. But how did he perceive it? Did he see those who were crucifying him as treating him unjustly? I don't think so. He prayed that they be forgiven, “for they know not what they do.”

Being treated unjustly isn't a matter of what happens to you, it is a matter of how you perceive it. In that sense, Sentence 3 makes sense. If I have decided to be unjust

³ The problems, in other words, are a manifestation of your own decision to be unjust (unloving) to others.

to another person in some way — to seek some personal gain at their expense, for instance, or to judge them in order to elevate my opinion of myself — then, when they respond in kind, or attempt to retaliate, I will perceive them as being unjust (7:3).

Our relational problems all arise because of our own mindset, one stuck in the belief that for me to gain, someone else must lose. External problems will inevitably arise, destroying our peaceful relationship (7:4).

We cannot solve these problems while operating from the same mindset that caused them. Our thinking must change, so that we “think that all [our] brothers have an equal right to miracles with [us]” (7:5). Our judgments of others must go. Any sense of superiority must go. Any desire to punish or to seek revenge must go. If that shift in thought does not occur, “you will not claim your right to [miracles], because you were unjust to one with equal rights” (7:5). You will experience whatever negative thing you wish for the other. If you deny them their rights you will feel denied; if you seek to deprive them of anything, you “have been deprived” (7:7).

Paragraph 8

8 A miracle can never be received because another could receive it not.
²Only forgiveness offers miracles, and pardon must be just to everyone.
³The little problems that you keep and hide become your secret sins, because you did not choose to let them be removed for you. ⁴And so they gather dust and grow, until they cover everything that you perceive, and leave you fair to no one. ⁵Not one right do you believe you have. ⁶And bitterness, with vengeance justified and mercy lost, condemns you as unworthy of forgiveness. ⁷The unforgiven *have* no mercy to bestow upon another. ⁸That is why your sole responsibility must be to take forgiveness for yourself.

• Study Question •

8. *Why is it illogical to think that one person could receive a miracle by denying a miracle to another person? (8:1–2)*

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You won't get miracles for yourself by trying to deny them to somebody else (8:1). Forgiveness is the only avenue to miracles, offered to everyone (8:2).

Jesus goes back to the point he made in Paragraph 7: Keeping a problem to yourself instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to remove them for you causes them to fester, becoming your “secret sins” (8:3). They lie in your consciousness undisturbed, gathering dust and growing like mold, infiltrating all your perceptions until they “leave you fair to no one” (8:4).

You aren't fair to anyone else because you aren't fair to yourself. You don't believe in your own rights (8:5). You believe in vengeance and, as a result, see yourself as

condemned and unworthy of forgiveness (8:6). You are left without any mercy to offer to others (8:7).

“That is why your sole responsibility must be to take forgiveness for yourself” (8:8). This statement and its other occurrences⁴ make it clear that self-forgiveness is primary. Without it, you have nothing to offer to others. And yet, in order to forgive oneself you must simultaneously be at least willing to forgive others, to see your brother as sinless.

Suffice it to say that any attempt to deeply forgive someone else is doomed to fail, or be imperfect, if you have not already accepted your own total forgiveness. Conversely, if you have indeed accepted your own forgiveness, forgiveness of others will follow inevitably.

Paragraph 9

9 The miracle that you receive you *give*. ²Each one becomes an illustration of the law on which salvation rests: that justice must be done to all, if anyone is to be healed. ³No one can lose and everyone must benefit. ⁴Each miracle is an example of what justice can accomplish when it is offered to everyone alike. ⁵It is received and given equally. ⁶It is awareness that giving and receiving *are* the same. ⁷Because it does not make the same unlike, it sees no differences where none exist. ⁸And thus it is the same for everyone because it sees no differences in them. ⁹Its offering is universal, and it teaches but one message: What is God's belongs to everyone, and is his due.

• Study Question •

9. *Why does each miracle illustrate the idea that justice means no one loses and everyone gains?*

When you accept forgiveness, you will give it. If giving is receiving, the converse is true: receiving is giving (9:1). That is the divine law that undergirds all salvation: “Justice must be done to all, if anyone is to be healed” (9:2). You cannot forgive yourself without forgiving others, and you cannot forgive others without forgiving yourself. We are all inextricably connected.

Perhaps the reason the Course seems to emphasize forgiving oneself above forgiving others, as our “sole responsibility,” is that its message is being delivered to minds dominated by the ego. Therefore, its appeal is couched in a way that takes egocentricity into account: “Take care of yourself; don’t worry about forgiving others. Forgiving yourself is your only responsibility.” Jesus knows that if we truly accept forgiveness for ourselves, we won’t be able to resist forgiving everyone. We will have totally abandoned vengeance and judgment. We will have realized that the only reason we were judging others is because we were judging ourselves, and since we no longer judge ourselves there is simply no reason left to judge anyone else!

⁴ T-2.V.5:1 (FIP), T-2.VIII.5:1 (CE); T-5.V.7:8 (FIP), (T-5.VI.13:4 (CE)

In God's plan for salvation, "no one can lose and everyone must benefit" (9:3). When I receive a miracle for myself, accepting forgiveness, it gives me an example of what that experience can do when I offer it to everyone (9:4). So in receiving it, I automatically extend it (9:5), in "awareness that giving and receiving are the same" (9:6).

To receive a miracle, to forgive myself, I must become aware of that identity of giving and receiving. As I realize that I remain as God created me, not unlike Him, I come to realize that no differences can exist in anyone else (9:7). We are all the sinless Son of God. If it is true for me it must be true for everyone (9:8). The offering of a miracle is universal. Its only message is: "What is God's belongs to everyone, and is his due" (9:9).

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. Arrogance and the fact that we actually *want* to keep our sins.
2. We are reluctant to give to the Holy Spirit all of this world's values, all belief that justice is not love, all sense that someone must lose. And this is because we are reluctant to gain salvation, deliverance from sin and all its effects. So we are only reluctant to give up all of our values because we are not sure we want salvation!
3. Fairness is that each should receive what he deserves, and what he deserves is based on who he really is. What he deserves is everything, since he is the Son of God.
4. It doesn't settle the matter because now there is a new loser, who feels unfairly treated, who has been caused to lose, and who now seeks to settle the score—in a new reckoning. And on and on it goes.
5. Because miracles depend on justice, and justice rests on the idea that no one can lose.
6. Everyone can be healed with equal ease, because everyone is equally deserving of healing. The first principle of miracles, then, is simple justice.
7. The decision to be unfair to someone, to unjustly treat them, to give them less than their due—which is everything.
8. Because only forgiveness offers miracles, and forgiveness is based on being totally just with *everyone*. (See also the last 3 sentences of Paragraph 7.)
9. Because the miracle is received by yourself and then given to others. Hence, it is offered to both you and others equally. It gets passed around and ends up benefitting everyone. This idea is reinforced by remembering that you cannot receive the miracle until you concede that everyone deserves it.