

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 26

Holy Ground

Section II

Release from Every Problem

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

Overview of Section II

This section carries on the theme of divine justice. It identifies some reasons why we don't ask the Holy Spirit to solve all our problems: first, we try to solve them by ourselves; second, we think some problems are insoluble; third, we want some people to suffer loss. It points out that the Holy Spirit can solve all problems with equal ease because, at the root, they are all the same.

Paragraph 1

It is *not* difficult to understand the reasons why you do not ask the Holy Spirit to solve *all* problems for you. ²*He* has not a greater difficulty in resolving some than others. ³Every problem is the *same* to Him, because each one is solved in just the *same* respect and through the *same* approach. ⁴The aspects that *need* solving do not change, whatever *form* the problem seems to take. ⁵And it is *not* the form that *can* be solved. ⁶A problem can appear in *many* forms, and it will do so *while the problem lasts*. ⁷It serves no purpose to attempt to solve it in a *special* form. ⁸It *will* recur, and then recur again and yet again, until it has been answered for *all* time and will not rise again in *any* form. ⁹And *only* then are you *released* from it.

• Study Question •

1. *To the Holy Spirit all problems are the same (no order of difficulty). Why?*

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The opening line clues us in to watch, as we read through the section, for “the reasons why you do not ask the Holy Spirit to solve *all* problems for you” (1:1). It indicates that our reasons are easy to spot, although apparently we need Jesus' help in doing so!

One thing that is definitely *not* the reason we fail to turn over some problems is that the Holy Spirit has more “difficulty in resolving some than others” (1:2). He sees past the

surface differences in our problems to the common root: “a demand that someone suffer loss, and make a sacrifice that you might gain” (2:2). So all problems are solved in exactly the same way, regardless of the outward form (1:3–4)!

In fact, the outward form cannot actually be solved (1:5). We usually approach problems by trying to alter some external aspect of things, but as long as the *root* remains, even if the outer form changes, the problem will keep cropping up in one form after another (1:6). So trying to solve the *form* of the problem “serves no purpose” (1:7). We have to get at the root of the problem (our demand that someone suffer loss and sacrifice for our benefit) and eradicate it “for all time”, or else the problem will keep showing up over and over (1:8). Only dealing with the root will release us from the problem (1:9).

This reminds me of “bindweed,” an invasive perennial vine that buries roots up to 9 feet deep in the soil and is extremely difficult to get rid of. Just cutting off the visible plants does absolutely no good! You have to somehow destroy the roots. That can be done only by repeatedly pulling up every visible outcropping, using a tool to get as much root as possible, and doing so over and over for a period of three or four years, according to an OSU web page, or else using repeated applications of something like Round Up (trying not to kill all the other plants around it).

The point is, you have to get the roots!

Paragraph 2

2 The Holy Spirit offers you release from *every* problem that you think you have. ²They are the *same* to Him because each one, regardless of the form it seems to take, is a demand that someone suffer loss, and make a sacrifice that you might gain.¹ ³And when the situation is worked out so *no one* loses is the problem gone, because it was an error in perception, which now has been corrected. ⁴One mistake is *not* more difficult for Him to bring to truth than is another. ⁵For there *is* but one mistake: the whole idea that loss is possible, and *could* result in gain for anyone. ⁶If *this* were true, then God *would* be unfair; sin *would* be possible, attack be justified, and vengeance fair. ⁷This *one* mistake, in *any* form, has *one* correction: There *is* no loss; to think there *is*, is a mistake.

¹ See T-25.X for a discussion of this idea that our personal problems are outward manifestations of our unfairness toward others: “No one can *be* unjust to you unless you have decided first to *be* unjust. And then *must* problems rise to block your way” (T-25.X.7:3-4).

• **Study Question** •

2. (2:6). Follow the logic of this sentence for each of the four things mentioned: “If loss is possible and can result in gain for someone, then God would be unfair.” Why? And so on for the other three things.

We can be free of every problem we think we have if we just give it to the Holy Spirit (2:1). He can deal with it because He is an expert spiritual gardener. He knows the root is the problem, and so He goes at it directly without regard to the form the problem takes. I’ve already pointed out what that root is, here identified in 2:2: “a demand that someone suffer loss, and make a sacrifice that you might gain.”

Next time you have a problem that seems insoluble, or that has lingered for years, try to see if you can detect some way in which you are holding on to that hidden root. Watch out that you don’t try to turn it back on the other person, however! It seems much easier to notice when the other person is asking *me* to sacrifice for *their* gain, but that’s between them and the Holy Spirit. For me to resolve my own problems, I need to allow the Holy Spirit to uproot that hidden demand for sacrifice *in me*.

The Holy Spirit will work things out “so *no one* loses”; that will eliminate the problem for good. He will have corrected the error in my perception (and probably in the perception of the other person as well) (2:3).

Because all the problems have a single root — “the whole idea that loss is possible, and *could* result in gain for anyone” — all mistakes can be corrected with equal ease, since really *there is only one mistake* (2:4–5).

It isn’t always easy to see how this lies at the root of the problem we might be facing, but if we are open and persistent I think we can find it no matter how deep the root has burrowed in the soil of our minds.

Perhaps you are not entirely convinced yet that this root idea is always wrong! Maybe, you may think, there are some times when another person really *must* lose in order for you, or society as a whole, might gain. Consider, though, what would have to follow if this were true (2:6).

First, “God *would* be unfair.” He would be rewarding some of His creations at the expense of others. Some people would lose unjustly.

Second, “sin *would* be possible” if loss is possible. One of us could wrongfully deny or steal what rightfully belongs to another, for instance.

Third, “attack [would] be justified.” If I can suffer loss at the hands of another, I would be justified in attacking them to recover what was stolen.

Fourth, “vengeance [would be] fair.”

But none of those things are true. God is fair; sin is impossible; attack is never justified; and vengeance is always unfair. All this depends on the fact that loss is impossible. And *that* depends on who and what we think we are. Bodies can lose; what we are cannot lose. “Nothing real can be threatened” (T-In.2:2).

The *one* mistake, then, is the belief in the reality of loss (2:7).

Paragraph 3

3 You *have* no problems, though you *think* you have. ²And yet you *could* not think so if you saw them vanish one by one, *without* regard to size, complexity, or place and time, or *any* attribute which you perceive that makes each one seem different from the rest. ³Think not the limits *you* impose on what you see can limit God in *any* way. ⁴The miracle of justice can correct *all* errors. ⁵Every problem *is* an error. ⁶It does injustice to the Son of God, and therefore is not true. ⁷The Holy Spirit does not evaluate injustices as great or small, or more or less. ⁸They have *no* properties to Him. ⁹They are mistakes from which the Son of God *is* suffering, but needlessly. ¹⁰And so He takes the thorns and nails away. ¹¹He does not pause to judge whether the hurt be large or little. ¹²He makes but one judgment: that to hurt God's Son *must* be unfair, and therefore is not so.

• Study Question •

3. (3:1–3). *In reality we have no problems. Notice how sentence 2 begins: “And yet you could not think so....” If we brought our problems to the Holy Spirit to be solved, and saw them vanish one by one without any distinction, we could not think we have any real problems. Does this offer a clue, perhaps, as to why we do not ask the Holy Spirit to solve our problems?*

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Why do we think we have problems, when in truth we have none (3:1)? It seems to be tied to our belief in loss. If we knew to the depths of our being that we cannot suffer loss, ever, would we still perceive problems? I think not.

Suppose, then, that we begin bringing our particular problems to the Holy Spirit one by one, as they occur. And suppose we see those problem vanish one after another no matter how big or complex they seem, no matter where they occur or when they have occurred, no matter how this problem seems to be different from the rest (3:2). Eventually you'd begin to realize that you really don't *have* problems at all.

God's abilities are not limited by our circumscribed perception (3:3). Justice can correct *all* errors; we may think some errors are beyond correction, but not to God (3:4). And “every problem *is* an error” (3:5). In other words, when you think you have a problem, you are mistaken!

When you think you have a problem, at root you are believing in the reality of loss to some aspect of God's Son (yourself or another), and injustice to the Son of God isn't possible because God is never unjust; therefore, the problem is not true (3:6).

The size of the injustice is irrelevant. Injustices don't have size; they are mistakes, they do not really exist (3:7–8). You, or some Son of God, may be suffering from what seems to be an injustice, but your suffering is needless (3:9). The Holy Spirit simply removes the cause of pain, the “thorns and nails” (3:10). He doesn't try to measure the

pain. All He knows is that hurting God's Son is of necessity unfair and therefore unreal (3:11–12).

I think removing the thorns and nails is interesting. How does He do that? I believe he does it by changing our perception. Workbook Lesson 193 teaches that if pain is real in our perception, we are harboring an unforgiveness in our minds. We are believing we have suffered some kind of loss at the hand of another, and cannot forgive them for it. The healing is the removal of that false perception, the removal of the imagined thorns and nails.

Do you see clearly how all through this paragraph the unreality of loss is taught, the mistake of believing in loss is underscored?

Paragraph 4

4 You who believe it safe to give but *some* mistakes to be corrected while you keep the others to yourself, remember this: Justice is total. ²There *is* no such thing as partial justice. ³If the Son of God is guilty, then is he condemned, and he *deserves* no mercy from the God of justice. ⁴But ask not God to punish him because *you* find him guilty and would have him die. ⁵God *offers* you the means to see his innocence. ⁶Would it be fair to punish him because you will not *look* at what is there to see? ⁷Each time you keep a problem for *yourself* to solve, or judge that it is one which *has* no resolution, *you* have made it great, and past the hope of healing. ⁸*You* deny the miracle of justice *can* be fair.

• Study Question •

4. (4:1–2) What reason is given here for why we might avoid the total justice of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:1)?

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To counteract our mistaken idea that we can select which mistakes we want the Holy Spirit to handle while holding on to the rest, Jesus points out that “justice is total” (4:1). No partial justice exists (4:2). In other words, a person is either forgiven completely or not at all.

Sentence 3 reminds me of the teaching of the Puritan evangelist, Jonathan Edwards, author of the famous sermon, “Sinners in the hands of an angry God.” In his teaching (maybe not in that exact sermon, but somewhere that I read) he points out that because God is infinite, any offense against God is automatically an infinite offense. I believe it was C. S. Lewis who commented to the effect, “There is no such thing as a little sin, any more than there is a ‘little’ pregnancy.” Jesus here agrees, saying that if any of our guilt is *real*, we don’t deserve any mercy from God (4:3).

The point is, of course, that our guilt is *not* real. Nor is anyone’s guilt real, and just because *we* think someone is guilty and deserves to die, God isn’t going to punish them (4:4). Instead, “God *offers* you the means to see his innocence” (4:5). Don’t expect God to be as uncharitable as you are! Why should God punish someone just because you refuse to look at his true innocence (4:6)? That would hardly be fair.

But this is exactly what we are doing when we choose *not* to turn a problem over to the Holy Spirit, preferring to solve it ourselves. Or perhaps we believe that the problem is so great it is beyond solution. We doubt that even God in His justice could forgive this person (4:7–8). But nothing is outside the reach of the Atonement.

Paragraph 5

5 If God is just, then can there be no problems that justice cannot solve. ²But you believe that some injustices are fair and good, and necessary to preserve yourself. ³It is these problems that you think are great and cannot be resolved.² ⁴For there are those you want to suffer loss, and no one whom you wish to be preserved from sacrifice entirely. ⁵Consider once again your special function: One is given you to see in him his perfect sinlessness. ⁶And you will ask no sacrifice of him, because you could not will he suffer loss. ⁷The miracle of justice you call forth will rest on you as surely as on him. ⁸Nor will the Holy Spirit be content until it is received by everyone. ⁹For what you give to Him is everyone's, and by your giving it can He ensure that everyone receives it equally.

• Study Question •

5. (6:1-4) How do these sentences give a plain answer to the question posed in 1:1?

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To be wholly just to everyone, justice must be able to solve all problems (5:1). We, on the other hand, tend to think “some injustices are fair and good, and necessary to preserve yourself” (5:2). We certainly do not think of it that way; an “injustice” could hardly be considered “fair” by anyone. Substitute the word “punishment” or “suffering” or “vengeance” or “retribution” for the word “injustice.” If we look at our lives and our relationships, we can probably all find some situations in which we believe that someone should suffer or be punished for what they did, and think that it is a necessary part of self-preservation. (Of course the “self” we are preserving isn’t our True Self!) What we might call “just retribution,” however, is “injustice” to God.

Why do some problems seem beyond help, some sins beyond forgiveness? Because we hold on to some problems like this, and insist on some form of payback for certain people (5:3–4). There are some people whom we want to suffer, and there really is no one whom we would entirely exempt from sacrifice (5:4). Some part of our minds still clings to the notion that some sins are real and deserve to be “paid for” with suffering.

With that in mind, look again at what we’ve been told about our special function: “*One* is given you to see in him his perfect sinlessness” (5:5). Note the emphasis: Just

² Based on the idea that our problems are manifestations of our injustice to others, the more attached we are to the injustice that generates the problem, the greater and more unsolvable the problem will seem to be. The problem looks unsolvable because we don’t *want* it to be solved.

one person! Yes, we're destined to forgive the entire world, but we start with *one* person. We are called to see him or her without sin, to ask no sacrifice of her or him, and to be unwilling for her or him to suffer loss of any kind (5:6). That's our special function: Learning to do this with just one person.

When we do we will call forth "the miracle of justice," and it will reflect back on ourselves just as much as on the other person (5:7). And it will spread, expanding ultimately to *everyone*, because the gift we offer to this one truly belongs to everyone. Our giving it to this one person will enable the Holy Spirit to "ensure that everyone receives it equally" (5:8–9).

Start with what's close at hand, or rather, with *who* is close at hand. We don't have to be concerned with how our little part will somehow expand to encompass the world. That's the Holy Spirit's job.

Paragraph 6

6 Think, then, how great your *own* release will be when you are willing to receive correction for *all* your problems. ²You will not keep *one*, for pain in *any* form you will not *want*. ³And you will see each little hurt dissolve before the Holy Spirit's gentle sight. ⁴For all of them *are* little in His sight and worth no more than just a tiny sigh before they disappear, to be forever undone and unremembered. ⁵What seemed once to be a *special* problem, a mistake *without* a remedy, or an affliction *without* a cure has been transformed into a universal blessing. ⁶Sacrifice is gone. ⁷And in its place the love of God can be remembered, and will shine away all memory of sacrifice and loss.

• Study Question •

6. (6:2–4). The word "for" occurs twice in these sentences, giving a reason for what precedes it. Why will you not keep a single problem? Why will you see each little hurt resolved?

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Imagine how it will feel when, by releasing a brother or sister from all of *their* problems (sins, faults), you find that *all* your problems have been corrected as well (6:1)!

I think I've had an experience something like that at least once in my life — at age 16. I was racked with guilt about a lot of teenage misbehavior I'd indulged in. I felt like a fraud because everyone thought I was such a "nice boy." At the Billy Graham Crusade in Madison Square Garden in 1957, I was told that God had forgiven all my sins, and in that moment, I believed it. I exited that arena feeling as if I were walking on air, a foot above ground. I sang the song with glee: "Gone! Gone! Gone! Gone! Yes, my sins are gone. Jesus reigns within and in my heart's a song. 'Buried in the deepest sea.'³ Yes, that's good enough for me. I will live eternally. Praise God! My sins are gone!"

³. A reference to Micah 7:19 in the Old Testament.

I don't subscribe any longer to the theology behind that experience, but I still subscribe to the experience itself! I was in touch with the justice of God. I knew, at least for a while, that all my problems had been solved.

When we've fulfilled our special function, and shared total forgiveness with another, we will no longer want pain in any form, so we will not hold on to a single problem for ourselves (6:2). There will be no big problems, because all of them are little in the sight of the Holy Spirit (6:4). The vision of the Holy Spirit will dissolve any hurt feelings, which will scarcely arouse even a tiny sigh before we see them "disappear, to be forever undone and unremembered" (6:4). Imagine that! Not even remembering any hurt! Those gargantuan problems that seemed beyond any hope of resolution have been "transformed into a universal blessing" (6:5). The very concept of sacrifice will have been eradicated from our minds, shined away by the memory of God's love (6:6–7).

When we read passages like this I think most of us, like myself, feel both inspired and intimidated: inspired by the vision and promise of it all, but intimidated because it seems above my present day-to-day experience. Well, I remind myself of that feeling I had at 16. That was real and, I think, a foretaste of what the Course is speaking of here. I don't think this is beyond reach for any of us! That whole idea that somehow we are the terrible exception, someone who can never learn what the Course is teaching, is exactly what this section is talking about, and we need to let it go!

Paragraph 7

7 He cannot *be* remembered until justice is loved *instead* of feared.
2He cannot *be* unjust to anyone or anything, because He knows that *everything* that is belongs to Him, and will forever be as He created it.
3Nothing He loves but *must* be sinless and beyond attack. 4Your special function opens wide the door beyond which is the memory of His love kept perfectly intact and undefiled. 5And all you need to do is but to wish that Heaven be given you instead of hell, and every bolt and barrier that seems to hold the door securely barred and locked will merely fall away and disappear. 6For it is *not* your Father's will that you should offer or receive *less* than He gave when He created you in perfect love.

• Study Question •

7. *Based on what we have read, how does your special function open the door to the perfect memory of God? See also 6:5–7.*

Remembering God's love is what brings us that experience. When you become aware of that love, which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19), washing over all our mistakes and wrapping us in its warm embrace, all that previous paragraph describes will be our experience. But it cannot happen until we stop fearing justice and start loving it (7:1). We must come to realize that God "cannot *be* unjust to anyone or anything" because all of it, all of us, are His perfect creation, "forever...as He created it" (7:2). What God loves is by definition "sinless and beyond attack" (7:3).

Entering into our special function (forgiving that one) opens the door of our mind wide to a full and complete memory of that ocean of love (7:4). Our part is simple: Just to “wish that Heaven be given you instead of hell.” We are causing our own hell by our self-contraction, attempting to defend our egos against every other ego that threatens our autonomy. We can learn to relax that mental knot through forgiving that one. Giving up that self-induced pain will blast away the seeming bars and locks on that mental door which seems so impossible to open (7:5). Just let God in. Each of us is entitled to everything He gave us when He created us in His perfect love (7:6).

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. Because each problem is solved in the same way, with the same approach. The core problem, the content, is the same, no matter what form it takes.
2. God would be unfair because He would have to take away from one person in order to give to another. Sin would be possible because the essence of sin is gaining at another's expense. Attack would be justified because that would be the only way to get anything. And vengeance would be fair because if someone gained by taking from you, it would only be fair to take it back if you could.
3. Because there are some problems we want to keep. We don't want a universal solution; we want some solved while we can hold on to others.
4. We want to keep some problems to ourselves and only have certain ones resolved. We think we can gain if others lose; we want specialness.
5. We think some injustices are fair, good, and necessary for our self-preservation. These are the problems that we think cannot be resolved, because we want some people to suffer loss. Try to think of some problem that, to you, seems insoluble, and try to see how, in that situation, that what is blocking your reception of a miracle is the desire to hold on to some form of injustice, that is, punishment or loss for someone.
6. You will not keep a single problem because you will not want pain in any form. You will see each hurt resolved because they are little in the sight of the Holy Spirit, meriting no more than a tiny sigh. Notice how we make some problems seem great (4:7), but He sees them all as little.
7. If the special problem I perceive in my relationships can be transformed into universal blessing, I can learn through my special function that God's justice is to give love equally to everyone. I can thus begin to remember His Love.