

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 28

The Little Gap

Section VII

The Ark of Safety

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

Overview of Section VII

There are two promises in play in this section: our promise to one another to remain separate (symbolized by our bodies, particularly when they are sick), and God's promise that we will remain forever one with Him and one another, which is the basis for perfect health. Our promise is compared to a house standing on a straw, while God's promise is like solid granite, unchangeable. When we stand on that promise, the body changes from our primary identity to a useful tool for healing.

Paragraph 1

God asks for nothing. ²And His Son, like Him, need ask for nothing, for there is no lack in him. ³An empty space, a little **gap**, would *be* a lack. ⁴And it is only there that he could want for something he has not. ⁵A space where God is not, a **gap** between the Father and the Son, is not the will of Either, Who have promised to be one. ⁶God's promise is a promise to Himself, and there is no one who could be untrue to what He wills as part of what He is. ⁷The promise that there is no **gap** between Himself and what He is cannot be false.¹ ⁸What will can come between what must be one, and in Whose wholeness there can be no **gaps**?

Jesus has exposed the "little **gap**" as nothing more than a hallucination, a hallucination seemingly made real by our allegiance to our secret vow to remain separate. Now, he gives another reason why it cannot be real: God's promise to Himself and to us, as part of Him.

He begins by stating, "God asks for nothing," because "there is no lack in Him." The same is true of God's Son, who is all of us (1:1–2). One who has no lack need not ask for anything; he already has all he needs.

¹. "Between Himself and what He is" means between the Father and the Son.

But a **gap**, which is “an empty space,” “would *be* a lack” (1:3). If something is separated from me by a gap, I *lack* it. The only way I can wish for something I don’t have is if there were a **gap** between me and it (1:4). The only way I can fail to have God is if God is separate from me. If we are One, I do not lack God. God and His Son have promised to be One; to have a **gap** between them is not the will of either one (1:5).

It might seem that God and His Son might have separate wills, or that the Son might somehow develop such a will. But God and His Son are not two; they are One. God made a promise to *Himself* in creating us as part of Himself. As part of God, it is impossible for us *not* to honor that promise (1:6). If *God promised* that there is no **gap** between Himself and His creation (which is “part of what He *is*”), that promise “cannot *be* false” (1:7). Only *one* will exists in God. There is no “other will” that can make a **gap** in God’s Wholeness. There can *be* no gaps in what is Whole (1:8).

The intent here seems clear to me. Jesus wants to convince us that our union with God is unchangeable. It stands on the integrity of God Himself, God’s promise to Himself. And because God created us as an extension of God’s Being, His integrity is *our* integrity. The promise is unalterable on both sides because the two sides are, and always have been, One. He makes this quite evident in the sentence that follows, adding a consequence we may not have thought of (2:1).

Paragraph 2

2 The beautiful relationship you have with all your brothers is a part of you because it is a part of God Himself. ²Are you not sick if you deny yourself your wholeness and your health, the Source of help, the Call to healing and the Call to heal? ³Your savior waits for healing, and the world waits with him. ⁴Nor are you apart from it, for healing will be one or not at all, its oneness being where the healing *lies*. ⁵What could correct for separation but its opposite? ⁶There is no middle ground in any aspect of salvation. ⁷You accept it wholly or accept it not. ⁸What is unseparated must be joined, and what is joined cannot be separate.

Not only our relationship with God is guaranteed to be permanent, “the beautiful relationship you have with all your brothers” is similarly guaranteed. We are part of God, and so is our relationship with one another (2:1)!

When we deny this omnipresent Oneness, we deny our wholeness and health. We deny the Source of help (God; the Holy Spirit; Jesus; our brothers and sisters). We deny the Call to be healed and to heal that is embedded in our divine nature. How could we *not* get sick (2:2)?

When the Course refers here to “your savior,” it means the person or persons you are called to forgive. He or she awaits your healing forgiveness. That healing comes as you acknowledge the oneness of your minds. Healing waits to extend from that individual act to the entire world (2:3). The world’s healing includes your own, of course, because “healing will be one or not at all, its oneness being where the healing *lies*” (2:4). That last phrase is significant in itself. It tells us that healing comes through the realization of

oneness. Oneness is the location of healing; healing is a characteristic of oneness. Of course it is! “What could *correct* for separation but its opposite?” (2:5) Separation causes sickness (see 2:2 above), so elimination of separation eliminates sickness.

There is nothing between separation and oneness, no “middle ground” (2:6). Either you *wholly* accept Oneness and healing, or you don’t accept it at all (2:7). There is no “almost” in salvation.

“What is unseparated must be *joined*, and what is joined cannot be separate” (2:8).

I think this is where we can get hung up. We feel we’ve made a lot of progress in letting go of separation, so how come we are not healed? The “all-or-nothing” aspect is why. Either our acceptance is total, or it doesn’t even count.

What about the idea that all we need is “a little willingness”? Elsewhere, the Course reassures us that our effort need not be total.² We do not need to be *wholly* willing because if we were, we wouldn’t need any further healing; we’d be home. As he puts it in Chapter 6:

“It is not even necessary that you complete the step [to give all to all] yourself, but it is necessary that you turn in that direction.” (T-6.VII.5:1–2 (CE))

The general idea is that you have to *prefer* joining, and that is enough. Once you turn in that direction, healing is guaranteed. The Holy Spirit will work with you to make your willingness complete. However, it does seem that healing in any specific case is not complete unless we *wholly* accept oneness and healing.

Paragraph 3

3 Either there is a **gap** between you and your brother or you are as one.
²There is no in-between, no other choice, and no allegiance to be split between the two. ³A split allegiance is but faithlessness to both, and merely sets you spinning round to grasp uncertainly at any straw that seems to hold some promise of relief. ⁴Yet who can build his home upon a straw and count on it as shelter from the wind?³ ⁵The body can be made a home like this *because* it lacks foundation in the truth. ⁶And yet, because it does, it can be seen as *not* your home, but merely as an aid to help you reach the home where God abides.

You and your sister or brother are either joined or separated (3:1). There can’t be anything in between. You can’t be *partly* in favor of joining and partly *not* (3:2). Indecisiveness is no more than a cloak for “faithlessness to both.” It leads to an inability

² See T-25.VIII.1:1-8 (FIP, CE) and also T-18.IV.1:1-10 (FIP,CE).

³ Matthew 7:26-27 (RSV): “And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” (See following footnote for comments.)

to accomplish anything in either direction, separation, or oneness. You grasp at straws. It's an exercise in futility (3:3).

Then follows an allusion to Jesus' parable of the houses built on sand or rock, but substitutes straw for sand, which seems to me like a conflation of the biblical story with the fable of the three little pigs, one of whom built his house of straw and had it blown down by the big, bad wolf. The idea is that the faithless attempt to maintain a split allegiance is as vulnerable to assault as is a house built of (or on) straw (3:4), which is precisely what we do when we attempt to maintain identity with our bodies (3:5).

Surprisingly, however, the body's "lack of foundation in the truth" is what enables our path to freedom. We can detach from it, see it as *not* our home. Instead, we can see it "as an aid to help [us] reach the home where God abides" (3:6). This dis-identification from the body is an oft-repeated theme in the Course. It does not imply any denigration of the body. I just shift away from thinking of the body *as me* to seeing it as "an aid to help [me] reach the home where God abides," a useful tool or device. The body is not something we *are* but something we *have*. This does not devalue the body. It *expands* our self-definition. We see ourselves as something much more magnificent than just a brain in a fleshly shell.

Paragraph 4

4 With *this* as purpose is the body healed. ²It is not used to witness to the dream of separation and disease, nor is it idly blamed for what it did not do. ³It serves to help the healing of God's Son, and for this purpose it cannot be sick. ⁴It will not join a purpose not your own, and you have chosen that it not be sick. ⁵All miracles are based upon this choice and given you the instant it is made. ⁶No forms of sickness are immune, because the choice cannot be *made* in terms of form. ⁷The choice of sickness seems to be of form, yet it is one, as is its opposite. ⁸And you are sick or well accordingly.

That dis-identification with the body is precisely what *heals* the body (4:1). We are no longer trying to make the body more than it is. The ego wants to use our bodies as witnesses to separation and disease. The ego wants us to blame the body for the misdeeds of our minds. We've discontinued that usage (4:2). We've given our bodies a new purpose as an aid to healing others and ourselves. With this as its purpose, "it cannot *be* sick" (4:3). If the chosen function of my mind is healing, the body must follow. It can't come up with a different purpose by itself (4:4) because it has no will (T-28.VI.1:6).

"All miracles are based upon this choice," the choice to heal by recognizing our shared minds (4:5). Jesus laid that out very early in the Text:

"Miracles are the absence of the body. They are sudden shifts into invisibility, away from the physical level. That is why they heal." (T-1.17 (CE), T-1.I.17:1-3 (FIP))

We shift away from the physical level; we identify with our invisible Self, focusing on the invisible Self of others. Healing follows. We are not making a choice based on

anything physical, anything “in terms of form,” and as a result, “No forms of sickness are immune” (4:6). The physical form *doesn't matter*. Whatever the form is, the choice behind it is the same, “it is one,” just as the choice for healing is one (4:7). Depending on which you choose, “you are sick or well accordingly” (4:8).

Paragraph 5

5 But never you alone. ²This world is but the dream that you can *be* alone, and think without affecting those apart from you. ³To be alone must mean you are apart, and if you are, you cannot but be sick. ⁴This seems to prove that you must be apart, yet all it means is that you tried to keep a promise to be true to faithlessness. ⁵Yet faithlessness *is* sickness. ⁶It is like the house upon a straw. ⁷It seems to be quite solid and substantial in itself, but its stability cannot be judged apart from its foundation. ⁸If it rests on straws, there is no need to bar the door and lock the windows and make fast the bolts. ⁹The wind *will* topple it, and rain *will* come and carry it into oblivion.⁴

This change in how we see our bodies and minds doesn't apply just to yourself; it includes everyone, especially those with whom you are in a relationship (5:1). We all think that we are alone, separate from one another, but that's not the truth. We cannot *be* alone. That's the mad dream that makes up the world. We cannot “think without affecting those apart from” us (5:2).

Let that sink in: “I can't think without affecting other people.” That's disturbing if our thoughts are negative. That's empowering if our thoughts are of healing.

We can't be alone. To be alone is to be *apart*, separate, and that guarantees sickness (5:3). Sickness is separation; separation is sickness. Why? Because our health, our wholeness, is Oneness. To be other than one is to be sick.

Seen from the physical perspective, this seems to prove that we *are* separate because we *do* get sick. It doesn't prove that. It just shows we have tried to hold on to our faithlessness, to our equivocation between oneness and separateness (5:4). But as we've seen above, “faithlessness *is* sickness” (5:5). It tries to hold on to *both*, but you are either joined or separate. You are sick because you are trying to maintain an impossible position, grasping at straws that seem to hold some hope of stability, only to blow away in the wind (5:6). Nothing you try to do can preserve faithlessness. Bar the door, lock the

⁴ Matthew 7:26-27 (RSV): “And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” This section is a creative application of this metaphor, in which the house built upon the sand becomes the body when its foundation is faithlessness. This is likened to building one's home, not on sand, but on “a straw.” At that point, no matter how much one bars the door and locks the windows, the wind and rain will easily carry off the house.

windows, make fast the bolts, and despite all your efforts, “the wind *will* topple it, and rain *will* come and carry it into oblivion” (5:7–9).

We should guard against such faithlessness. How are we holding on to separateness while proclaiming we want oneness? What do we do to bar the door and so on, trying to preserve our separate self? (The next paragraph offers some clues.)

Paragraph 6

6 What is the sense in seeking to be safe in what was made for danger and for fear? ²Why burden it with further locks and chains and heavy anchors, when its weakness lies not in itself, but in the frailty of the little **gap** of nothingness whereon it stands? ³What can be safe which rests upon a shadow? ⁴Would you build your home upon what will collapse beneath a feather’s weight?

Think of all the ways you seek to be safe in your body. It was “*made* for danger and for fear” (6:1). What is the sense? Ultimately the body *cannot* be safe. It will wither, stop functioning, and die. It is a house of straw, and its weakness stems from its foundation, “the little **gap** of nothingness whereon it stands” (6:2). We realize the body’s foundation is rotten and ready to collapse (6:3–4).

I don’t think this means we stop caring for our bodies. That would be plain foolish. We take care of them as we would take care of our cars, household appliances, and furniture. But we do not go to extremes. We don’t spend all our time and money trying to beautify them or make them last forever. It *can’t* last forever. Paradoxically, the best thing we can do to guarantee the health and longevity of the body is to devote it to the purpose of healing and to extending love in the world.

“You have another dedication, which would keep the body incorruptible and perfect as long as it is useful for your holy purpose.” (T-19.IV.5:1 (CE, FIP))

Paragraph 7

7 Your home is built upon your brother's health; upon his happiness, his sinlessness, and everything his Father promised him. ²No secret promise you have made instead has shaken the foundation of his home. ³The winds will blow upon it and the rain will beat against it, but with no effect. ⁴The world will wash away, and yet this house will stand forever, for its strength lies not within itself alone. ⁵It is an ark of safety, resting on God's promise that His Son is safe forever in Himself.⁵ ⁶What **gap** can interpose itself between the safety of this shelter and its Source? ⁷From here, the body can be seen as what it is, and neither less nor more in worth than the extent to which it can be used to liberate God's Son unto his home. ⁸And with this holy purpose is it made a home of holiness a little while, because it shares your Father's will with you.

Your real foundation is “your brother's health; ...his happiness, his sinlessness, and everything his Father promised him” (7:1). We are founded on that unity, not on our separateness. That false foundation hasn't affected the true foundation at all; your brother, like you, is still as God created him (7:2). Like the little pig's brick house, the big, bad wolf can huff and puff but never blow down the house (7:3). *The entire world* can wash away, as in Noah's Flood, but “*this* house will stand forever.” Its strength rests on God's promise to keep His Son forever safe in Himself (7:4–5). Our foundation is like the fabled Noah's Ark that carried Noah and his family to safety, along with all the animals. After that deluge was over, according to the story told in the Bible, God made a promise never to destroy the world again (at least not by flood):⁶

“Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ‘As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.’” (Genesis 9:8–11 NRSV)

It does seem as if God in Genesis is only promising not to *flood* the whole earth, which leaves room for other forms of destruction. But it's a move in the right direction. The Course makes the promise quite a bit stronger: “to keep His Son safe forever in

⁵ This is a reference to the story of Noah's ark (Genesis 6-9), at the end of which God places a rainbow in the sky, as a sign of His promise that “the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 9:15 [RSV]). In the above reference, our real home is an “ark of safety” that rests not on the sea nor on any worldly foundation, but on God's eternal “promise that His Son is safe forever in Himself.”

⁶ The idea that God would wipe out the entire human race He had created, except on family, comes from a primitive concept of a vengeful, capricious God, and does not represent the higher concept of God seen in later parts of the Bible.

Himself,” which seems to refer to the mutual pledge God and His Son made to one another in creation, mentioned in the last section and the first paragraph of this section:

“God keeps His promises; His Son keeps his. In his creation did his Father say, ‘You are beloved of Me and I of you forever. Be you perfect as Myself, for you can never be apart from Me.’ His Son remembers not that he replied, “I will,” though in that promise was he born.” (T-28.VI.6:1–4)

“God’s promise is a promise to Himself, and there is no one who could be untrue to what He wills as part of what He is. The promise that there is no gap between Himself and what He is cannot be false.” (1:6–7)

We have God’s *promise*, the original, irrevocable contract we have with God, and no subsequent promise we may have made to each other to remain separate has the power to supersede it. The **gap** is powerless (7:6).

Resting in the safe shelter of God’s promise gives us a different perspective about the body. We can see it “as what it is,” without over- or under-valuing it. Its worth lies only in “the extent to which it can be used to liberate God’s Son unto his home” (7:7). With that as its holy purpose, the body can be “a home of holiness a little while” because our will has joined with God’s will for us (7:8).

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.