

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM<sup>®</sup> Text, Chapter 31

### The Final Vision

#### Section IX

## *Choose Once Again*

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

### Overview of Section IX

This section wraps up the Course's teaching. It begins with a continuation of the discussion of *temptation* and lessons we have taught ourselves. It centers on the *choice* Jesus calls us to make over and over, the single choice between spirit or flesh, life or death, and the role that is being presented to us all to become *saviors*, along with Jesus. It ends with a marvelous prayer uttered by Jesus, rising to a climax of the vision of a redeemed world and beyond.

### Paragraph 1

Temptation has *one lesson* it would teach, in all its forms, wherever it occurs. <sup>2</sup>It would persuade the holy Son of God he is a body, born in what must die, unable to escape its frailty, and bound by what it orders him to feel. <sup>3</sup>It sets the limits on what he can do; its power is the only strength he has; his grasp cannot exceed its tiny reach. <sup>4</sup>Would you be this if Christ appeared to you in all His glory, asking you but this: "Choose once again if you would take your place among the saviors of the world, or would remain in hell, and hold your brothers there." <sup>5</sup>For He *has* come, and He *is* asking this.

Think back to what Jesus has said about the lessons we learn in life. They are only two. The Holy Spirit desires to teach us that "What was never true is not true now, and never will be. The impossible has not occurred, and can have no effects" (T-31.I.1:2-3). In opposition to the Spirit's lesson, the impossible lesson we have taught ourselves is that "the Son of God is guilty" (T-31.I.4:6).

That is temptation's lesson in its essence. Temptation has been one of the themes of the entire chapter, as I've pointed out. Remember that temptation is not something *outside* of us that draws us into misbehavior. Instead, the Course teaches that it is, in essence, *a wish*, specifically a wish to be something you are not. A body, for instance. When you are tempted to engage in ego-based thinking, you are trying to *teach* yourself a particular concept of yourself (Section I, *The Concept of the Self*).

Here, that Jesus links that lesson of guilt to a self-concept: You are a body, which must die. The body's feelings bind you. You cannot escape its weaknesses. You are limited to its meager power. You cannot exceed its tiny reach (1:1–3). All temptation aims to teach you this lesson of the ego. Because you are trapped in this frail, physical form, you cannot avoid “sin” of some sort. You are guilty almost by definition. As the psalmist lamented, “Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5 NRSV) What a contrast! Am I the Son of God or a puny body?

Consider for a moment how temptation teaches us that we are bodies. Temptation is a wish to be something you are not (VIII.6:1): something besides the Son of God, something separate from your brother (see VIII.3), some kind of false image. (See also VIII.8:1–4.) A body meets those criteria:

something *not* formless spirit;

a thing separate from all other bodies;

something that isn't eternal but always dies. Does this description of the body seem familiar?

“The body could not separate your minds unless you *wanted* it to be a cause of separation and of distance seen between you. Thus do you endow it with a power that lies not within itself. And herein lies its power over you, for now you think that *it* determines when you meet, and limits your ability to make communion with each other's minds. And now it tells you where to go and how to go there; what is feasible for you to undertake and what you cannot do. It dictates what its health can tolerate and what will tire it and make it sick. And its 'inherent' weaknesses set up the limitations on what you would do, and keep your purpose limited and weak.” (T-29.I.5)

Think how closely this description fits how we habitually think of ourselves. Do we think the body limits how we meet with others? Of course, we do. How else could we meet? (Well, there's Zoom and Skype and FaceTime, but none of those seem as good as meeting “in person,” which we define as having our bodies in reasonable proximity.) Indeed, our bodies seem to limit our ability to “make communion with each other's minds.” Does it limit where we go and how we go there? Sure. Don't we all consider the relative strength and abilities of our bodies to determine “what is feasible...to undertake and what you cannot do”? As we conceive ourselves, our bodies “set up limitations on what you would do, and keep your purpose limited and weak.”

The Course is attempting to teach us that all these things *are not true*; they are the lesson we have taught ourselves by giving in to our insane wish to be separate (temptation) again and again.

Picture the situation depicted in 1:4. Imagine Christ appearing to you in all His glory, as He did to the author of “*The Revelation of John*” in the Bible:

“In the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. Revelation 1:14 His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force.”

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.’” (Revelation 1:13–18 NRSV)

Imagine that! Hear Him saying, “Choose once again if you would take your place among the saviors of the world or would remain in hell, and hold your brothers there” (1:4). Why do I ask you to make every effort to imagine this scenario? Because “He *has* come, and He *is* asking this” (1:5). The whole Course is His appeal to us to stop repeatedly choosing hell, choosing to be something other than what He is, and now, in this world, to *take our place among the saviors of the world*. He isn’t asking you to do something you are not entitled to do and capable of doing. He says, “Take your place”! This is *your* place. This is your calling! You *are* the light of the world, and that is *your only function*. So, stop dawdling and take your place! Do you really prefer to be this pathetically limited body that is buffeted and crushed by the world? Wouldn’t you rather be one of the world’s saviors? Because that is what you are in truth if only you would turn your back on the temptation to be something else.

## Paragraph 2

2 How do you make the choice? <sup>2</sup>How easily is this explained! <sup>3</sup>You always choose between *your* weakness and the strength of Christ in you. <sup>4</sup>And what you choose is what you think is real. <sup>5</sup>Simply by never using weakness to direct your actions, you have given it no power, and the light of Christ in you is given charge of everything you do. <sup>6</sup>For you have brought your weakness unto Him, and He has given you His strength instead.

### • Study Question •

1. (2:4). Which does this sentence mean:
  - A. You will choose the one that you already think is real.
  - B. By virtue of choosing one, that one will become real to you.

•

Naturally, the question arises (2:1): “How can I make this choice to be among the saviors of the world?” Jesus replies that it’s easy to explain (2:2). We tend to think that there are many choices, and a lot of them are complex. But he tells us here that there are

only two things to choose between. You always choose either to rely on your own strength (which is actually weakness) or to depend on the strength of Christ in you (2:3).

Perhaps you believe that you have a strong ego and often choose to rely on that. Remember, however: The ego's form that acts in this world is the body, and as we've seen, the body is inherently weak and limited. The ego and the body are parts of the same illusion of a separate self. "The body is the symbol of the ego, as the ego is the symbol of separation." (T-15.IX.2:1-3 (CE)) To rely on the ego's strength is to rely on the body's strength, which is weakness.

The choice comes down to a choice between weakness (yours) and strength (Christ's). There is a parallel here to passages in Paul's Epistles:

"The life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present mortal life is lived by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20 REB)

"...but his answer was: 'My grace is all you need; power is most fully seen in weakness.' I am therefore happy to boast of my weaknesses, because then the power of Christ will rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9 REB)

What follows in 2:4 makes a critical connection. It tells us that when we rely on our little self (the ego-body), the weakness of the body is what we think is real, but when we choose to rely on Christ's strength, *that* is what becomes real for us. When you seem to yourself to be weak or helpless, you must be choosing to identify with the little-S self. When you choose to identify with the Son of God, then you can say with the Apostle Paul, "Christ lives in me," and "the power of Christ rests upon me." The simple choice, then, is choosing not to use weakness to direct your actions. When you do that, "the light of Christ is given charge of everything you do" (2:5). Paul said he was happy to boast of his weaknesses. I understand that to mean that he happily acknowledged that his ego and body were weak, choosing instead to rely on the power of Christ. In the verse of 2 Corinthians that follows the one quoted above, he says, "When I am weak, then *I* am strong." He seems to be distinguishing between the lowercase self and the uppercase Self, or Christ.

The next sentence of the Text gives a further clue: "For you have brought your weakness unto Him, and He has given you His strength instead" (2:6). For me, one way of putting this into practice is a simple prayer or affirmation, such as, "I will not trust in my own strength to do this. I ask Christ to replace my weakness with His strength." If I do this correctly, one sure outcome will be that I will not look out for my individual best interest alone but will act or speak in a way that brings gain to everyone concerned. When I trust in my identity as Son of God instead of acting as an ego, I will function from a basis of Oneness.

## Paragraph 3

3 Trials are but **lessons** which you failed to learn presented once again, so where you made a faulty choice before you now can make a better one, and thus escape all pain that what you chose before has brought to you. <sup>2</sup>In every difficulty, all distress, and each perplexity you face, Christ calls to you and gently says, “My brother, choose again.” <sup>3</sup>He would not leave one source of pain unhealed, nor any image left to veil the truth. <sup>4</sup>He would remove all misery from you whom God created altar unto joy. <sup>5</sup>He would not leave you comfortless, alone in dreams of hell,<sup>1</sup> but would release your mind from everything that hides His face from you.<sup>2</sup> <sup>6</sup>His holiness is yours, because He is the only power that is real in you. <sup>7</sup>His strength is yours, because He is the Self that God created as His only Son. <sup>8</sup>The images you make cannot prevail against what God Himself would have you be.<sup>3</sup>

### • Study Question •

2. *How does the concept of “trials” relate to what has been discussed thus far?*
3. *How does this lesson relate to the lesson in 1:1?*

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**(3:1)** This is a long and vital sentence with lots of information. So let’s unpack it, starting with the first word: “trials.” “Trials” are basically the same as “temptations,” a very recent topic. A trial is a situation that tempts you to see it from the ego’s viewpoint.

Trials, it says, are lessons of some kind. That can’t be the same thing as “lesson” in 1:1, where it refers to what temptations aim to teach us in the ego’s curriculum, namely, that we are frail, separate bodies. Here Jesus says the true purpose of trials is to provide an opportunity to make a better choice. Over and over in our lives, we chose to learn the ego’s lesson when a situation arose that tempted us to side with the ego. As a result, we “*failed to learn*” what the Holy Spirit wanted to teach us. Trials have a different lesson they can teach us. They offer us a chance to choose to listen to the Holy Spirit instead of the ego.

<sup>1</sup> John 14:18 (KJV): “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”

<sup>2</sup> There are many Bible verses in which God hides His face from us; for instance, Deuteronomy 31:17 (KJV): “Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured.” Here, Christ (our true Self), rather than hiding His face from you or forsaking you, would instead “release your mind from everything that hides His face from you.”

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 16:18 (KJV): “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” In the above allusion, our false images of ourselves (which amount to idolatry) cannot prevail against our reality as God created it.

Trials are “presented once again.” We make the wrong choice over and over, but the trials keep cropping up over and over. The Holy Spirit is very patient! He keeps presenting the same trials over and over until we finally get the point.

Jesus also demonstrated his patience earlier in the Text:

“Watch your mind for the scraps of meanness, or you will be unable to ask me to do so. I can help you only as our Father created us. I will love you and honor you and maintain complete respect for what you have made. But I will neither love nor honor it unless it is true. Ask me truly, and I will come. Do not ask me truly, and I will wait. I will never forsake you, any more than God will. But I *must* wait as long as you will to forsake yourself. Because I wait in love and not in impatience, you will surely ask me truly. I will come gladly in response to a single unequivocal call.” (T-4.V.14:1–10 (CE), T-4.III.7:5–10 (FIP))

“If you want to be like me, I will help you, knowing that we *are* alike. If you want to be different, I will wait until you change your mind. I can teach you, but only you can choose to listen to my teaching.” (T-8.III.10:1–3 (CE), T-8.IV.6:3–5 (FIP))

We should be grateful that he is willing to wait for us to change our minds and keeps offering another chance to “choose again.”

We instinctively shrink from the expectation of trials because, in the past, they have brought us nothing but pain. However, the way to avoid the pain is not to avoid trials but to choose the strength of Christ in them instead of choosing the ego-body’s weakness. The form of trial doesn’t matter. It can be a difficulty, some distressing situation, or some perplexing problem. In all of them, we need to see them as Christ’s gentle call, “My brother, choose again” (3:2). He will bring back every source of pain because He wants to heal them all. He wants to disillusion us from every false image we have used to hide the truth (3:3). His goal is to remove all our misery and restore our God-ordained function as an “altar unto joy” (3:4). That image speaks to me of someone who is so utterly free of pain, distress, and perplexity that they are perpetually joyful. In the *Manual for Teachers*, He calls it “pure joy,” and says it will be ours when we have stopped relying on our own strength:

“There is one thought in particular that should be remembered throughout the day. It is a thought of pure joy; a thought of peace, a thought of limitless release, limitless because all things are freed within it. You think you made a place of safety for yourself. You think you made a power that can save you from all the fearful things you see in dreams. It is not so. Your safety lies not there. What you give up is merely the illusion of protecting illusions. And it is this you fear, and only this. How foolish to be so afraid of nothing! Nothing at all! Your defenses will not work, but you are not in danger. You have no need of them. Recognize this, and they will disappear. And only then will you accept your real protection” (M-16.6:1–14 (FIP)).

This understanding makes it easier to face the trials of life. We can see them as a gentle call to respond to them differently and make a different choice. They are Christ’s

attempt to remove all our misery, to release our minds from every illusion that hides His face from us (3:5). This different choice is the choice that brings us Heaven instead of “dreams of hell” (3:5). Instead of holding our brothers and sisters in hell, we can choose to take our place among the saviors of the world.

These lessons are the same as those mentioned in Sections I and V, leading us gently, step by step, teaching us that we are something other than the concept of self we have taught ourselves:

“But confuse it not with difficulty in the simple things salvation asks you learn. It teaches but the very obvious. It merely goes from one apparent lesson to the next, in easy steps which lead you gently from one to another with no strain at all.” (T-31.I.2:2-4 (CE))

“Now must the Holy Spirit find a way to help you see this concept of the self must be undone if any peace of mind is to be given you. Nor can it be unlearned except by lessons aimed to teach that you are something else. For otherwise, you would be asked to make exchange of what you now believe for total loss of self, and greater terror would arise in you.”

“Thus are the Holy Spirit’s lesson plans arranged in easy steps, that though there be some lack of ease at times and some distress, there is no shattering of what was learned, but just a retranslation of what seems to be the evidence on its behalf.” (T-31.V.7:3-8:1 (CE))

We mistake our trials as evidence of our past learning, our self-concept. The Holy Spirit and Christ are simply trying to “retranslate” the evidence, that is, the trials, allowing them to prove something entirely different to us. We can allow them to prove that:

“His holiness is yours, because He is the only power that is real in you. His strength is yours, because He is the Self that God created as His only Son. The images you make cannot prevail against what God Himself would have you be.” (3:6-8)

He is teaching us that our true identity is Christ. Whatever He has, *we also have* because we are the holy Son of God that God created.

## Paragraph 4

4 Be never fearful of temptation, then, but see it as it is: another chance to choose again, and let Christ's strength prevail in every circumstance and every place you raised an image of yourself before.<sup>4</sup> <sup>2</sup>For what appears to hide the face of Christ is powerless before His majesty, and disappears before His holy sight. <sup>3</sup>The saviors of the world, who see like Him, are merely those who chose His strength instead of their own weakness, seen apart from Him. <sup>4</sup>They will redeem the world, for they are joined to all the power of the will of God. <sup>5</sup>And what they will is only what He wills.

### • Study Question •

4. *How does identifying with the strength of Christ make you a savior?*

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Once we are aware of the nature of temptations and trials, we need no longer fear them. We are able now to see temptation “as it is: another chance to choose again, and let Christ's strength prevail in every circumstance and every place you raised an image of yourself before” (4:1). That sentence confirms for me that Jesus is running a continuing theme all during the chapter. He begins with the simple lesson salvation teaches (that only the truth is true; anything else is impossible and has no effects). He shows how our self-concept (a lie) works as a veil, causing us to see ourselves as victims of the world. By choosing Christ's strength instead of our self-concept as victims, we see the world differently and become channels of salvation to the world. Instead of seeing trials as yet another way the world is oppressing us, we can see them as they are: “another chance to choose again.”

Our weakness, our self-concept, seems to hide the face of Christ from us, but it has no power to do so if we choose to see Him. When we claim the power of Christ as our own, the images we see in ourselves and the world disappear before His holy sight, given to us (4:2). As saviors of the world, we see as He sees (4:3). The only qualification is that we choose His strength instead of our own weakness. Doing so joins us to “all the power of the will of God” (4:4). Our choice purges our will of anything other than what God wills (4:5), so we have become irresistible. That is what enables us to redeem the world.

## Paragraph 5

5 Learn, then, the happy habit of response to all temptation to perceive yourself as weak and vulnerable with these words:

*<sup>2</sup>I am as God created me. <sup>3</sup>His Son*

<sup>4</sup> Leviticus 26:1 (RSV): “You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no graven image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land, to bow down to them; for I am the LORD your God.” In the Course allusion, the graven image (or idol) we are erecting is a false image of ourselves.



*can suffer nothing. ‘And I **am** His Son.*

<sup>5</sup>Thus is Christ’s strength invited to prevail, replacing all your weakness with the strength that comes from God and that can never fail. <sup>6</sup>And thus are miracles as natural as fear and agony appeared to be before the choice for holiness was made. <sup>7</sup>For in that choice are false distinctions gone, illusory alternatives laid by, and nothing left to interfere with truth.

• **Study Question** •

5. (5:5). *How do the foregoing words invite Christ’s strength to prevail? How do these words invite your weakness to be replaced?*

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The phrase “as God created” occurs 121 times in the entire Course (CE version, including mentions in footnotes). It shows up 17 times in the Text. The whole sentence, “I am as God created me,” occurs seventeen times in the Text and Workbook (including mentions in footnotes). The emphasis on this idea in the Course is undeniable. The *first* occurrence of the sentence is here in the last section of the Text. All other references are in the Workbook, beginning with Lesson 94. It is the only title of a lesson used more than once, three times in 94, 110, and 164, and three more in the reviews.

“As God created me.” This truth must replace our concept of the self. We could say that the entire Course aims at this transference of identity. The Course’s emphasis on forgiveness is a part of this change because I cannot recognize my identity as God’s offspring without simultaneously recognizing the same thing applies to everyone. One way of understanding forgiveness is to see it as the realization that only the guiltless Son of God exists; there is no sin; it has no consequence.

**(5:1–3).** The paragraph under consideration begins with the words, “Learn, then, the happy habit of response to all temptation” (5:1). As it has done before, the Course here tries to help us form a new, beneficial *habit*. This habit consists of a new way of responding to temptation or trials. We saw previously that a trial is a situation that tempts you to see it from the ego’s standpoint, or, as 5:1 puts it, tempts you to perceive *yourself* as a weak and vulnerable ego. The new habit is to regard such trials as an opportunity to reinforce your new awareness of your God-given Identity as His Son, Who cannot suffer. You are reminding yourself that, as Lesson 99 says:

“It is God’s will your mind be one with His. It is God’s will that He has but one Son. It is God’s will that His one Son is you.”(W-99.8:6–8)

If you would like an expanded practice about learning this happy habit, read Lesson 193, “All things are lessons God would have me learn.” All things, including “all temptation to perceive yourself as weak and vulnerable,” need not be seen as ruinous “trials” but as beneficent “lessons” from God. As we look at all of them, we are learning to say to ourselves, “There is a way to look on everything that lets it be to [me] another step to Him, and to salvation of the world” (W-193.13:1).

These words should become a specific practice. We should memorize these words and repeat them to ourselves every time we encounter a temptation to respond as weak and

vulnerable egos. That probably translates to scores of times every day. Be sure to include the indicated emphasis on the word “am”: “And I *am* His Son” (5:4)

If I am as God created me, nothing can harm me. Nothing can elicit fear in me. I cannot suffer (5:3). Does it feel a bit like whistling in the dark to affirm those things? Of course, it does. We are *practicing, learning* our identity with Christ, and shedding our self-concept bit by bit. Every time you affirm the truth, you chip away at your idol’s image. As the Course advises us, be a happy learner (T-14.II.1,4,6; T-14.III.1).

Notice the emphasis in 5:5 of the word “invited.” When I affirm my Identity with Christ and affirm that I share the divine nature, it serves as an invitation to Christ’s strength to prevail over my weakness. It’s a process. To the degree that I want that replacement, it will happen. It may be only partial at first, but as I purify my intention, God’s strength that can never fail will operate in and through me. Miracles will become as natural as the fear and agony that I’ve been used to (5:6).

The central focus of the chapter has not changed. It focuses on my *choice* between the ego and Christ, between my meager self-concept and the glory of my true Identity. It is that choice that makes the difference (5:7). Look how powerful your choice can be! It can:

- banish false distinctions
- rule out illusory alternatives
- and erase anything that interferes with the truth.

Think how this short list reflects much of Chapter 31. “False distinctions” can include so many things that separate us, like race, religion, skin color, nationality, cultural differences, sex, and age. It includes distinctions between our will and Gods’. I think it could be understood to include any kind of duality that we imagine divides the Oneness.

“Illusory alternatives” is a clear reference to Section IV, “The Real Alternative.” It includes all the roads the world seems to offer us for completion, satisfaction, and happiness when the only alternative is God and our identity with Him.

Any list of things that interfere with truth must include our false self-concept, guilt, imagined faults we see in one another, and even the very idea that anything or anyone exists outside of our Self.

Your “choice for holiness” (5:6) is the magic potion that erases all this and opens the way to glory.

## Paragraph 6

6 You *are* as God created you, and so is every living thing you look upon, regardless of the images you see. <sup>2</sup>What you behold as sickness and as pain, as *weakness* and as suffering and loss,<sup>5</sup> is but temptation to perceive *yourself* defenseless and in hell. <sup>3</sup>Yield not to this, and you will see all pain, in every form, wherever it occurs, but disappear as mists before the sun. <sup>4</sup>A miracle has come to heal God's Son and close the door upon his dreams of weakness, opening the way to his salvation and release. <sup>5</sup>Choose once again what you would have him be, remembering that every choice you make establishes your own identity as you will see it and believe it is.

### • Study Question •

6. *Is your choice about how you see yourself or how you see your brother?*

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When I affirm that I am as God created me, I logically have to include “every living thing you look upon” (6:1). I realize that I am the Son God created and that He created only one Son. Therefore, everyone must be part of that one Son. Freed of any delusion of guilt in myself because I am as God created me and not what I've made of myself, there is no longer anything I want or need to project onto my brothers or the world. In the absence of those projected images, I now see Christ everywhere. Perhaps the images persist a while, but I see through them. I know they are only mirages, and despite what I seem to see, I *know* that every living thing is as God created it.

If I see sickness, pain, weakness, suffering, or loss in others, I realize that all I am seeing is just a temptation to see myself that way, defenseless and in hell (6:2).

See if you can call to mind someone in your life that you think of as having a hard time. For example, try mentally saying something like this to yourself:

When I behold [name] as sick, weak, suffering, or deprived, it is no more than a temptation to perceive myself as defenseless and in hell. She remains as God created her, and so do I. Let me choose again what I would have her be, remembering that this choice will establish my own identity as I see it.

If you refuse to yield to the temptation (the wish to be other than the Son of God), you will see *all* the pain, *every* form of it wherever it occurs, “disappear as mists before the sun” (6:3). You and she are miraculously healed together as God's Son (6:4). As God's Son, you have closed the door on your dreams of weakness, which opens “the way to [her] salvation and release” (6:4).

What turns the key to a new vision is your *choice* of what you *want* to see in the other person. You *choose* to see them as God's perfect Son and not as a weak, suffering, separate creature. You make a choice “remembering every choice you make establishes

<sup>5</sup> This refers to what you behold as sickness and pain *in others*. The rest of the paragraph explains that as you choose to see them as God created them, you will see their pain “disappear as mists before the sun.”

your own identity as you will see it and believe it” (6:5). How you see yourself and how you see others is a matter of one single choice.

Remember, this has to become our *habitual response* every time we become aware that we see pain and sickness in others. We realize it is a temptation to see ourselves the same way, and we “yield not,” but affirm the opposite. Recall what was said in Section II, the first paragraph:

“As we prepare to make a choice that will result in different outcomes, there is first one thing that must be overlearned. It must become a habit of response so typical of everything you do that it becomes your first response to all temptation and to every situation that occurs.”(T-31.III.1:2–3)

It said back then that we need to learn a specific lesson very well: “You *never* hate your brother for *his*, sins, but *only* for your own” (T-31/III.1:4). That is the thought behind what has just been said here: How you choose to see your brother determines how you see yourself. So if you see another as weak and suffering, it’s because you are unconsciously choosing to see yourself that way.

“When you meet anyone, remember it is a holy encounter. As you see him, you will see yourself. As you treat him, you will treat yourself. As you think of him, you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose sight of yourself. Whenever two Sons of God meet, they are given another chance at salvation. Do not leave anyone without giving salvation to him and receiving it yourself.” (T-7.VI.6:1–7 (CE))

We can practice forming this new, happy habit of response by choosing again how we want to see ourselves. We can repeat those lines from Paragraph 5:

*I am as God created me. His Son  
can suffer nothing. And I **am** His Son.*

## Paragraph 7

7 Deny me not the little gift I ask, when in exchange I lay before your feet the peace of God, and power to bring this peace to everyone who wanders in the world uncertain, lonely, and in constant fear. <sup>2</sup>For it is given you to join with him, and through the Christ in you unveil his eyes and let him look upon the Christ in him. <sup>3</sup>My brothers in salvation, do not fail to hear my voice and listen to my words. <sup>4</sup>I ask for nothing but your own release. <sup>5</sup>There is no place for hell within a world whose loveliness can yet be so intense and so inclusive it is but a step from there to Heaven. <sup>6</sup>To your tired eyes I bring a vision of a different world, so new and clean and fresh you will forget the pain and sorrow that you saw before.

• Study Question •

7. What is the “little gift” he asks of you?

•

Notice how Jesus begins speaking here in the first person and continues this until the end of the section, which is the end of the Text.

Back in the first paragraph, he asked:

“Would you be this [would you want to be a body] if Christ appeared to you in all His glory, asking you but this: “Choose once again if you would take your place among the saviors of the world, or would remain in hell, and hold your brothers there.” For He *has* come, and He *is* asking this.” (T-31.IX.1:4–5 (CE))

And now he indeed *has* come, and *is* asking us to make this very choice. The choice is the gift he is asking for. He switches to the first person. Try, as you read, to hear these final paragraphs as a personal message from Jesus to you. I will attempt to do the same thing in my commentary, applying what is said to myself.

Jesus is offering me the peace of God and the power to bring this same peace to all the wandering, uncertain, lonely, and fearful people in the world (7:1). In exchange for that incredible gift, all he asks of me is the little gift of *joining* with everyone I meet, claiming the Christ in me and unveiling their eyes to see the Christ in themselves (7:2). I choose to disregard the temptation to see others as anything but Christ. The joining he enables me to do with others is a simple acknowledgment of the truth of our union in one Self.

Jesus, you ask me to hear your voice and listen to your words, which ask nothing of me but my release (7:3–4)! *The peace of God!* I’ve always loved this benediction from the book of Hebrews:

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, . . . equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13:20-21)

The God of peace offers me the peace of God. How can I refuse? He provides all I need to give the little gift he is asking for. He equips me with everything good that I may do his will. He works *in me* to accomplish His will.

What does the peace of God look like? It looks like a world that has no place for hell. It looks like a world so intensely lovely and so inclusive that it is just a single footstep away from Heaven (7:5). The word “inclusive” intrigues me. In recent years we’ve had an increased emphasis on inclusivity in the United States. The peace of God is a state “so inclusive” it is almost Heaven! Remember that we’re talking about a state of mind, not a transformation of the material world—at least not yet. When I have chosen to see with Christ and to see Christ in everyone, to join with them in our common Identity in Christ, my mind is at peace with everyone. My heart *includes* everyone; I exclude no one from my love. As Teilhard de Chardin wrote, “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second

time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.” It will revolutionize everything in our lives.

Our eyes are tired; they ache with the sight of all the pain and suffering in the world, all the ways the world and its denizens attack us. Jesus is bringing us “a vision of a different world.” It is a new world (unlike the old), a clean world (not darkened with “sin”), and a fresh world (filled with life). It is *so different* that the sight of it causes us to “forget the pain and sorrow that [we] saw before” (7:6).

## Paragraph 8

**8** But this a vision is which you must share with everyone you see, for otherwise you will behold it not. <sup>2</sup>To *give* this gift is how to make it yours. <sup>3</sup>And God ordained, in loving-kindness, that it be for you. <sup>4</sup>Let us be glad that we can walk the world and find so many chances to perceive another situation where His gift can once again be recognized as ours!<sup>6</sup> <sup>5</sup>And thus will all the vestiges of hell, the secret sins and hidden hates, be gone, and all the loveliness which they concealed appear like lawns of Heaven to our sight, to lift us high above the thorny roads we traveled on before the Christ appeared.

### • Study Question •

8. (8:3). *When do you think God “ordained” that the gift of peace be yours?*

•

The thing is, this must be a *shared* vision. It cannot be seen individually, without sharing it with everyone.

“It is impossible to remember God in secret and alone. For remembering Him means you are not alone, and are willing to remember it. ... Everyone seeks for love as you do, and knows it not unless he joins *with* you in seeking it. If you undertake the search together, you bring with you a light so powerful that what you see is given meaning. The lonely journey fails, because it has excluded what it would find.” (T-14.XII.9:1–2, 5–7 (CE))

If you do not share peace, you will not *see* it! The only way to *recognize* the gift of peace is to *give* it (8:2). “To have, give all to all” is the first lesson of the Holy Spirit (T-6.VII.A (CE), T-6.V.A (FIP)). Another way the Course puts it is, “To give is how you *recognize* you *have* received” (W-159.1:6 (CE)), and in Chapter 29: “Unless he gives, he will not know he *has*, for giving is the proof of having” (T-29.IV.1:6 (CE)). We have all already received the gift of peace; God gave it in creation. But we do not know we *have* it unless we share it with everyone we see.

<sup>6</sup> Based on the context, “another situation” is 1) one in which we face trials (3:1) or difficulties (3:2) that offer us a chance to choose again, or 2) one in which we see those who are sick and in pain (6:2) or who wander “in the world uncertain, lonely, and in constant fear” (7:1)—a situation that offers us a chance to heal them with a miracle.

Giving the gift is how we make it our own (8:2). Giving is the means of knowing we have it. It is already ours; God, in His loving-kindness, ordained it for us (8:3).

As we walk the world, we will encounter numerous trials and temptations. The message of this chapter is that we can *be glad* it is so! We can learn to see them all as “chances to perceive another situation where His gift can once again be recognized as ours” (8:4). That choice can become our happy habit of response to all temptation. We can see every trial as another chance to make a different choice from our past fearful reactions. Instead of an occasion for fear, it can be an opportunity to give peace and so recognize that we have it. Notice how it says we will “once again” recognize the gift (8:4). “Once again” appears to mean that it is a repeated experience. We continue to encounter trials, and every one presents another opportunity to remember the truth of what we are and the gift we always have. No matter how many times we have chosen wrongly and failed to learn the lesson, it will be “presented once again,” so that we can “choose once again.” This time perhaps, we will choose correctly and so learn the lesson that has always been patiently waiting for us.

In choosing again, we have chosen to see the Christ in our brother and ourselves. Our choice is the pivotal factor in stripping away “the vestiges of hell, the secret sins and hidden hates” that have obscured “all the loveliness” of “the lawns of Heaven.” We will be lifted “high above the thorny roads we traveled on before the Christ appeared” to our sight (8:5). What a glorious promise! How can you resist?

## Paragraph 9

<p>9 Hear me, my brothers; hear and join with me. <sup>2</sup>God has ordained I cannot call in vain, and in His certainty I rest content. <sup>3</sup>For you <i>will</i> hear, and you <i>will</i> choose again. <sup>4</sup>And in this choice is everyone made free.</p>
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### • Study Question •

9. (9:2–3). Besides ordaining that Jesus cannot call to us in vain, what else has God ordained? (See 8:3.)
- 

Here is another statement in which Jesus personally appeals to us to hear him and to join with him (9:1). I say again: Spend some time in quiet visualizing this. Imagine him appearing to you in all his glory, saying, “Hear me! Choose once again.”

He gives us strong assurance here that, whatever our experience has been up until now, it is the pre-ordained will of God that Jesus cannot appeal to us in vain (9:2). That means that “you *will* hear, and you *will* choose again” (9:3). And more: “In this choice [yours and mine] is everyone made free” (9:4). He says that he rests content in God’s certainty about all of this. Certainly, if Jesus can rest content that we *will* hear and choose rightly, so can you and I!

## Paragraph 10

10 I thank You, Father, for these holy ones who are my brothers as they are Your Sons.<sup>7</sup> <sup>2</sup>My faith in them is Yours. <sup>3</sup>I am as sure that they will come to me as You are sure of what they are and will forever be. <sup>4</sup>They will accept the gift I offer them, because You gave it me on their behalf. <sup>5</sup>And as I would but do Your holy will, so will they choose. <sup>6</sup>And I give thanks for them.

### • Study Question •

10. (10:3–5). *What are the things Jesus has faith in us to do?*

•

At this point, Jesus breaks into a prayer to the Father, which continues until the end of the Text. This paragraph is written in iambic pentameter (five pairs of “*da-DAH*” syllables). The first two lines even rhyme.

“I thank You, Father, for these holy ones  
who are my brothers as they are Your Sons.  
My faith in them is Yours. I am as sure  
that they will come to me as You are sure  
of what they are and will forever be.  
They will accept the gift I offer them,  
because You gave it me on their behalf.  
And as I would but do Your holy will,  
so will they choose. And I give thanks for them.”

Jesus thanks God the Father *for you and all of us* who study now with him (10:1). Imagine you overhear him praying like this! How would you feel? He says we are his brothers as well as God’s Sons. Interestingly, he isn’t afraid to use the plural “Sons” even though he has pointedly told us God has only one Son. He knows we think of ourselves as separate, and it’s okay for now. He accommodates his words to us.

He has faith in us! We usually think it’s all about our having faith in Jesus, but he has faith in us because *the Father* has faith in us (10:2). He trusts that we will come to him and that we will accept the gift he has been offering us—the gift of the peace of God, which we will accept by joining with our brothers and sharing it with them. Our acceptance of His gift is part of our recognition of what we are “and will forever be” (10:3). His certainty rests on God’s certainty, which is as certain as possible! I can feel comfortable feeling certain that we will all receive this divine gift. If God is sure of it, how can I *not* be sure? It is as certain that we will choose to do God’s will as it is that

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 11:25 (KJV): “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” Whereas in this Bible verse, Jesus is thanking God for revealing that the towns that rejected him “shalt be brought down to hell” (11:23), here in the Course he is thanking God for the holy brothers who are following him to God.



Jesus does (10:5), so he gives thanks for us, completing the thanksgiving with which he began (10:6).

## Paragraph 11

**11** Salvation's song will echo through the world with every choice they make. <sup>2</sup>For we are one in purpose, and the end of hell is near. <sup>3</sup>In joyous welcome is my hand outstretched to every brother who would join with me in reaching past temptation, and who looks with fixed determination toward the light that shines beyond in perfect constancy. <sup>4</sup>Give me my own, for they belong to You. <sup>5</sup>And can You fail in what is but Your will? <sup>6</sup>I give You thanks for what my brothers are, and as each one elects to join with me, the song of thanks from earth to Heaven grows from tiny, scattered threads of melody to one inclusive chorus from a world redeemed from hell and giving thanks to You.

### • Study Question •

11. To whom does Jesus stretch out his hand?

•

Every time we choose to join Jesus as saviors to the world, salvation's song echoes through the world (11:1). Our purpose has become the same as his; that means that "the end of hell is near" (11:2). Think about what it means to share Jesus's purpose. He said things like, "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." He is asking us to take our place among the saviors of the world with a similar purpose (1:4). This Course isn't so much a course in having personal miracles as it is a course in becoming a *miracle worker*. His outstretched hand is inviting us to join with him in his crusade to save the world (11:3). We choose to reach past temptation and look "with fixed determination" to the light that shines "with perfect constancy" beyond illusion in everyone.

"You now share my inability to tolerate lack of love in yourself and in everyone else, and *must* join the Great Crusade to correct it." (T-1.26.6:4 (CE), T-1.III.1:6 (FIP)).

Back in Miracle Principle 26 in Chapter 1, he says of this crusade: "The slogan for this Crusade is 'Listen, learn, and *do*.' This means:

Listen to my voice,  
learn to undo the error, and  
*do* something to correct it.

The first two are not enough. The real members of my party are *active workers*." (T-1.26.6:5-9 (CE))

That last sentence about active workers isn't in the FIP edition, and it is stunning. If in fact you want to join with Jesus, it isn't enough to listen to His voice and learn to undo error, refusing to tolerate a lack of love in ourselves. We must join the crusade and *actively do something* to correct that lack everywhere.

In 11:4, he says, “Give me my own.” It is a prayer to God, asking that the Father give us to him. We are his own, but we also belong to God. We are One with the Father and the Son (11:4). This passage brings to my mind the “high priestly prayer” in the Gospel of John, Chapter 17:

“I have made your name known to the men whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours and you gave them to me, and they have obeyed your command. Now they know that all you gave me has come from you; for I have taught them what I learned from you, and they have received it: they know with certainty that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me.”

“I pray for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, because they belong to you. All that is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine; and through them is my glory revealed.” (John 17:6–10 REB)

He asks God to give us to him and then asserts that God cannot fail in what is His will (11:5). It’s another way of asserting that the outcome is inevitable. “But the outcome is as certain as God.” (T-2.VI.8:7 (CE), T-2.III.3:10 (FIP)) We are going to remember. We are going to join with him in his crusade. And again, Jesus gives thanks for what you and I are, the truth of us as God created us! Let yourself soak in that awareness, that Jesus gives thanks to God for you.

Then he shares his vision of what the world will be like as, one by one, we choose to join with him in redeeming the world from hell. He envisions that “the song of thanks from earth to Heaven grows from tiny, scattered threads of melody to one inclusive chorus... giving thanks to You (the Father)” (11:6). Imagine the entire world joining in a single song of Thanksgiving! Try to join him in that vision. Say your “Amen, let it be so.”

## Paragraph 12

**12** And now we say “Amen,” for Christ has come to dwell in the abode You set for Him before time was, in calm eternity. <sup>2</sup>The journey closes, ending at the place where it began. <sup>3</sup>No trace of it remains. <sup>4</sup>Not one illusion is accorded faith, and not one spot of darkness still remains to hide the face of Christ from anyone. <sup>5</sup>Thy will is done, complete and perfectly,<sup>8</sup> and all creation recognizes You, and knows You as the only Source it has. <sup>6</sup>Clear in Your likeness does the light shine forth<sup>9</sup> from everything that lives and moves in You.<sup>10</sup> <sup>7</sup>For we have reached where all of us are one, and we are home, where You would have us be.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 6:10 (KJV): “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” In this allusion, rather than God’s will being brought from Heaven to earth, God’s will is done when earth has vanished and we have all returned to Heaven.

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:26 (KJV): “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The above allusion implies a return to the beginning, in that here at the end we shine in God’s likeness, just as at the beginning we were *created* in His likeness.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 17:28 (KJV): “For in him we live, and move, and have our being.”

• Study Question •

12. Throughout the Course and this last section in particular, we often are seen as on a journey. What is unique about the journey in this final paragraph?

•

(12:1). Jesus told Helen that she would know when the Course was complete when she heard the final “Amen.” All three volumes, in fact, contain an “Amen” in the final paragraph.

And so, now we *do* say “Amen” together (12:1). Continuing his prayer, Jesus now includes us in it, our minds joining with his to say a joint, “Amen.” As this vision takes shape, it forms the “abode” that God, “in calm eternity” before time ever was, set as the dwelling place of Christ—our one true, shared Self (12:1). As One, we are finally at home in God *and know it*.

“Christ is God’s Son as He created Him. He is the Self we share, uniting us with one another and with God as well.” (W-WI.6.1:1–2)

“For everyone who ever came to die or yet will come or who is present now is equally released from what he made. In this equality is Christ restored as one identity, in which the Sons of God acknowledge that they all are one.” (W-300.4:2–3 (CE))

Earlier Jesus told us that our spiritual journey is a “journey without distance.”

“The journey to God is merely the reawakening of the knowledge of where you are always and what you are forever. It is a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed.” (T-2.XIII.12:6–7 (CE))

Carrying on in the same vein, Jesus here says the journey ends “at the place where it began” (12:2). We’ve come full circle. More accurately, we’ve never gone anywhere. “No trace of it remains” (12:3). The apparent obstacles along the way that hid the face of Christ—the illusions and spots of darkness—are all gone as well. No one any longer has faith in any of them. Everyone sees the face of Christ in everyone else (12:4). God’s Will is done completely and perfectly. *All of creation* recognizes God in everything and knows that God alone is the Source of all (12:5). The likeness of God blazes forth from “everything that lives and moves in” God (12:6). All is as it was always meant to be.

All of this wondrous vision of divine finality is true because, at last, “we have reached the place where all of us are one, and we *are* home, where [God] would have us be” (12:7). Jesus speaks of it in the present tense because, I think, he sees it as already accomplished. He says that “we *have* reached the place” where we all are one and know it. We can see this vision with him if we want it. It takes some deep purification of our thoughts. He told us so back at the start: “Miracles are everyone’s right, but purification is necessary first” (T-1.6 (CE)). He made it clear the purification is mental in W-151.15:2: “Your ministry [which consists of giving miracles] begins as all your thoughts are purified.”

One last observation: The fact that all illusions and spots of darkness have disappeared must mean that the physical universe is gone, and all perception with it. The

ultimate end of our journey is not a glorified Earth but a formless existence in God and as parts or aspects of God.

“Christ’s Second Coming gives the Son of God the gift to hear the Voice for God proclaim that what is false is false, and what is true has never changed. And this the judgment is in which perception ends. At first you see a world which has accepted this as true, projected from a now corrected mind. And with this holy sight, perception gives a silent blessing and then disappears, its goal accomplished and its mission done.”

“The final judgment on the world contains no condemnation, for it sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin, and wholly purposeless. Without a cause, and now without a function in Christ’s sight, it merely slips away to nothingness. There it was born, and there it ends as well. And all the figures in the dream in which the world began go with it. Bodies now are useless and will therefore fade away, because the Son of God is limitless.” (W-WI.10.1:1-2:5 (CE))

He has given us our marching orders: forgive the world. Choose once again in every situation to see the face of Christ beyond the illusions of body and ego. Do it over and over and over until every mind has been liberated from guilt and comes to know itself as Christ. That is the crusade we’ve been called upon to join. May it be so. May it be soon.

## Answer Key

1. B. By virtue of choosing one, that one will become real to you. — In light of the following sentence.
2. A trial is related to the idea of temptation. A trying situation is one in which you are tempted to see it from the ego’s standpoint.
3. It is not the same lesson. It must be the opposite lesson.
4. Sentence 2 gives the answer: We become saviors because Christ’s strength shines away all illusions. His power makes you a savior of the entire world (4:4).
5. By claiming that you are God’s Son, you are claiming that the strength of God’s Son is yours. By saying that, as His Son, you cannot suffer, you are denying your weakness, for only weakness can suffer.
6. Both. According to 6:2, when I see sickness, pain, weakness, suffering, and loss in someone else, it is only the projection of my wish to see *myself* “defenseless and in hell.” When I affirm that “I am as God created me,” I am choosing what I want my brother to be. That choice establishes *my* identity as I will see it and believe it *is* (6:5).
7. The gift of choosing once again, of responding to temptation by choosing Christ’s strength instead of my weakness. It is the gift of an innocent self-concept given to another.
8. God ordained the gift of peace be ours in our creation. It has always been ours.

9. 8:3 says God ordained that the gift of peaceful vision be ours. 9:3–4 seems to imply as well that He has ordained that you *will* hear Jesus and choose again, and in so doing make everyone free.
10. He trusts that we will come to him and that we will accept the gift he has been offering us, and will choose to do God's will with him.
11. He stretches out his hand to every one of us who join him in reaching past temptation to the light. In other words, all those who “choose again” as he repeatedly asks.
12. In this final paragraph the journey is completely gone. It has “closed,” leaving no trace.

#### **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.

#### **Effects of Switching Editions of the Course**

The commentaries on Chapters 29, 30, and 31 were written prior to the publication of the Complete and Annotated Edition (CE) of the Course in 2017. Originally they were based on the edition published by the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP). The references to other parts of the Course were based on the FIP edition, and the comments themselves were based on the same edition. There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and these final chapters had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate CE reference if it differs from the FIP reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE restored the plural use of “you” where the FIP had substituted the phrase “you and your brother.” One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

*FIP: Thus **you and your brother** but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.*

*CE: **You** shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.*

*Lesson “><center> • Bulk*

- 2 cups couscous
- Dairy
- blue cheese
- 1 pt cream, heavy
- 1 dozen eggs
- Produce
- 1 bunch asparagus
- bananas
- 3 broccoli crowns 2.99/lb (reg 3.99)
- 1 bunch cilantro
- 1 english cucumber
- 4 heads garlic
- 1 bunch green onions
- 1 head lettuce, romaine
- 1 onion, medium white
- 1 pepper, green bell
- 1 pt strawberries, Hood 3.99 each
- Snacks
- Kettle chips 2.99 ea (reg 4.99)</center></a>