

# *The Pain*

## *A Divine Gift or a Trap?*

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# INTRODUCTION

Almost all of humankind cries out, from the infant to the old man. Each expresses -- one way or another -- the burden of pain that he suffers. The infant expresses it by crying, which sometimes seems to be without reason, while his tongue is unable to utter words to explain what lies behind his tears. The old man, on the other hand, is embarrassed to express his pain in any way, but his facial expression usually reflects what he suffers from within! Some believers even stand in amazement and censure God for allowing them to suffer more distress than the evil and the non-believers.

Here some might wonder:

- 1- Has God created man to suffer a world full of pain?
- 2- Is pain a sign of God's wrath unto man?
- 3- If the "Word of God" has incarnated and suffered for our sakes, why didn't He remove the pain from us?

## **1- A Gift or a Trap?**

Although pain causes grief and distress, we find the Psalmist singing: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me your comforts delight my soul" (Psalms 94:19). As the believers in Jerusalem suffered many troubles -- their possessions confiscated, forced to leave Jerusalem and scattered across the world -- St. Peter, the apostle of circumcision, wrote to them to lift up their hearts and minds with the Holy Spirit of God. Thus, they would recognize the Father Whose love opens His embrace unto them as children who will inherit the glories, the Holy Spirit that sanctifies them and the incarnated Word of God that does not offer animal sacrifices but redeems them with the sacrifice of Himself so they would enjoy the partnership of eternal glory (1 Peter 1:1-5).

Some believe that many have perished as they suffered pain and thus wonder: Is pain a divine gift or a trap into which men fall?

## **2- Pain is a Love Sacrifice, Not a Sign of God's Wrath:**

Mankind once looked upon pain, temptation and distress as a sign of God's wrath unto them. When the "Word of God" came, incarnated as a heavenly Archpriest, offering a unique sacrifice as He gave up Himself to death -- the death of the cross -- He redeemed the whole world. Pain became a sign of love, a love sacrifice, that carries a sweet taste before the Father through which the believer takes pride in pain and considers himself branded with the marks of the Lord Jesus on him (Galatians 6:17). Thus, we would not wonder that St. John Golden Mouth praised and said: "Beautiful are the chains of St. Paul!" Pain is the ornament of the soul as a bride who carries the mark of her crucified Groom!

## **3- Our Pain persists the Course of the Crucified:**

St. Paul, who was captivated by these wounds, said: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). He willingly subdued to his weaknesses in all these troubles, whereas the strength of Christ is made perfect in virtue (2 Corinthians 4:10; 12:9).

### **St. Gregory of Nyssa**

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:5). He lifts up our souls and considers our pain as His own. Thus how much joy can surround us as we become partners of Christ when we suffer for His sake! With faith we can realize the new birth and the resurrection. Hence those who participate in His suffering would also rise with Him. "That I may know Him, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings by becoming like Him in His death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

### **St. John Chrysostom**

If, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ. Let us then welcome the encouraging suffering of Christ. Let it flow in us if we truly seek the outpouring of consolation with which all grief is consoled, although it is not the same for everyone. If consolation was the same for everyone, he wouldn't have wrote that, as the sufferings of Christ abound, so consolation also abounds by Christ all the more. Those who participate in suffering will also participate in the consolation according to their fellowship in the suffering of Christ.

### **Origin, the Scholar**

He who loves Christ -- the Word -- would impersonate Him as much as he can. Thus Christ did not cease to do right unto the people. Though He was treated with disgrace and was blasphemed upon, He was tolerant and suffered to die by their hands. He endured without wishing evil on anyone. These three things are the acts of loving one's neighbor; in the absence of these things, he who says that he loves Christ or bears His kingdom is deceiving himself.

### **Father Maximus the Confessed**

## **4- Pain reveals God's Kindness, Wisdom and Might:**

Without pain, man would give God his back, not his face; but through pain he would cry unto Him and thus would realize His kindness and might. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with testing He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13). He allows sufferings so that the believer would enter into a deep and serious conversation with God who is able to deliver him!

If all creation will dissolve and the shape of this world will change, then why do we, who are a part of this creation, wonder that we encounter deep general pain?

We are admitted to grievances which our LORD has allowed such as is common to us, for He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we may tolerate, but will also make a way to escape temptation so that we can abide it!

God has ordered all things in measure and number and weight (Wisdom 11:21), and does not allow us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. He tempts all who fight and struggle in the path of the true religion with grief, but does not allow them to be tempted above that they are able to bear. He gives tears to drink in great measure (Psalms 80:5) to all those who should appear that, in the midst of their grief, they kept their thanks unto Him.

I'm convinced that if there was a voice, it would move the Righteous God, for His mercies are not distant, but with temptation He will also make a way to escape so you may bear it.

**St. Bassilli the Great**

### **5- Pain and our Persistence in the Childhood unto God:**

The Son of God suffered to make us children of God, while the son of man (we humans) refused to suffer so that his childhood unto God would persist.

**St. Cyprian**

### **6- Through Faith we awaken our Faith in Christ:**

St. Kirelos the Great believed that awakening Christ means counting on and crying out unto Him in the midst of pain and distress. He said: "Christ dwells in the midst of His chosen people, and as He -- in His sacred wisdom -- allows them to suffer some persecution, He seems asleep. However, when the storm is strongest and when those in the ship cannot bear no more, they should cry out: 'Awake, why do you sleep, O Lord?' (Psalms 44:23) For He will arise and perish all fear without delay. He reprimands those who grieve us (i.e., the storms of distress -- whether from within or from outside us and whether they were of the devil or physical weariness or turmoil), turns our grief into joy and reveals before us a bright sky without troubles. For He does not turn His back on those who count on Him."

### **7- Our Pain proclaims our Love unto God and the People:**

If love makes us bear pain, then accepting pain will flourish us before the LORD as His loving children!

Love does not find anything too hard and the jealous does not find any work too difficult. Behold how much Jacob tolerated for the sake of Rachel, the woman to whom he was promised. As the Holy Book says: "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had for her"

(Genesis 29:20). Afterward he told us himself about what he had to bear: "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night" (Genesis 31:40). Thus, it becomes us to love Christ and to seek Him all the way, and then every difficult matter would seem easy for us and what is long would seem short.

Let us be hit with the arrows of His love that we might say in every moment: Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech (Psalms 120:5).

**St. Jerome**

I believe that what I suffer is for His sake. Thus I do not just bear pain; I also rejoice in pain awaiting the coming hope. I do not suffer for my own sake, but for your sakes.

**St. John Golden Mouth**

He who suffers in the LORD will inherit the features of kindness, for spiritual love can be experienced in distress.

**St. Mark, the Monk**

### **8- Our Pain in Christ pulls us out of the Sin and beautifies us:**

If pain has entered our life through sin, then as we thankfully accept the pain we destroy sin, and our suffering would become an accepted thanksgiving sacrifice before the LORD.

David did not fall in sin when he was suffering from Saul, his persecutor. When he was weak in distress, he was much closer to God even though he seemed miserable. Sometimes distress can be useful to us, for it is the most useful lancet during the temptation of Satan.

The soul does not return to God unless it is ripped off of the world and nothing can truly rip it off like pain and suffering.

**St. Augustine**

He suffered for the sake of His enemies. This is the sweet scent offering, the accepted sacrifice. Thus, if you suffered for the sake of your enemies as a sweet offering, you will become an accepted sacrifice even if you died. This is what he meant by saying, "Be followers of God" (Ephesians 5:1).

St. Paul rejoiced in his suffering as he beheld the wondrous fruit that pain brings in people, like the Christians of Carinthia.

We do not fear poverty, sickness or any other distress, for we know that we are on our way to a better life that is invincible against death and destruction and that is free from every injustice.

The school of grief teaches kindness and wisdom.

Grief and death were born from sin and they both consume sin.

Grief is purposely given to us to heal us from sin.

**St. John Golden Mouth**

### **9- Pain flourishes us:**

If you were gold, then why do you fear fire? For the debasement is burned in the furnace and you will come out pure. If you were wheat, then why do you fear threshing? Though you will not appear to be what you really are unless the straw is removed so that your origin and honor would appear.

He that refuses to suffer distress will find that his impatience will not save him from the distress that will fall upon him.

The distress that you suffer in your life here is the whip from God.

The distress of the world will educate you and the temptations of present life will polish your longings.

The distress, even though great, is the way to perfection and not the reason for destruction.

God tests man with distress to show him his real self so that he would shoulder the blame.

The fire tests the vessels of the potter and temptation tests the righteous.

Neither grape can become wine nor can olive become oil unless they are pressed by the mill.

The soul does not return to God unless it is ripped off the world and nothing can truly rip it off like pain and suffering.

**St. Augustine**

### **10- Pain is a Teacher of Wisdom and a useful Book for our Growth:**

Let your suffering and pain become books to advise you.

**Mar Ephram of Seria**

### **11- Pain is the way of Enjoying Inner Joy:**

He bore my pain in Him so as to grant me His joy! I surely remember His pain as I preach His cross. He had to bear grief in order to conquer...

He wanted us to learn how to defeat death and even more how to defeat the coming eternal death.

O God, You had suffered, not your pain, but my pain as You were wounded for our transgressions....

It is not far from truth that He had suffered for the sake of his persecutors for it is known that they are suffering punishment for defiling sacred matters.

**St. Ambrose**

There exists joy that is actually sorrow as it hides misery inside it and there exists useful misery that is the new world's source of joy.

**Mar Ephram of Seria**

## **12- Suffering Pain grants us the Trait of Tolerance:**

"Let my life be free of my spirit, my soul of my body and my bones from death. For I will not live forever and thus should suffer patiently...." He had a desire to pass away from here... until his body was dissolved. Job did not care much for the nakedness of his bones. Why? Because he said that the present life is quickly vanishing. "I will not live forever." Obviously, Job was talking about his earthly life. How can he be tolerant in this matter? Only because receiving the coming happiness requires patience and tolerance.... Job's talk carried an obvious hint about weakness and the desecration of material life that is unstable, rapidly vanishing and does not carry the traits of eternal life.

**Father Hesychius of Jerusalem**

## **13- Pain brings the Tears that God's Hand will wipe away:**

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

The evil that dwells with you will pass away, and what you are patiently waiting for will come. He will wipe away the sweat of tiredness; He will wipe away every tear and there shall be no more crying. Here below, we shall rue the midst of temptations, as Job has wondered: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? Are not his days also like the days of a laborer?" (Job 7:1)

**St. Augustine**

## **14- Pain is the Path to Eternal Glory:**

The ulcers of his body were preparing him for the crown of heaven.

### **St. Jerome**

All the weariness of long years of this present life vanishes when we look upon the eternity of the coming glory. When we think about the great blessing, all our sorrows fade away and become like a vaporizing haze, like the lightning that soon disappears.

### **St. John Cassian**

You will gain the world of light in the stead of the painful suffering that you have to endure for one day.

If you suffered the hunger for a while for the sake of His love, your desire to see His face will then burn inside you.

If darkness appeared on your face from the deeds you accomplished for His sake, He will beautify you with His glory forever and ever.

If you were stripped of what is yours, He will clothe you with His light and take from you what is yours.

If you gave up what you own, you will own Him inside you eternally.

### **The Spiritual Sheikh (John Saba)**

The loving man that always draws close unto God cannot be hurt from the waves, no matter how strong or how many. On the contrary, he will come out with a new strength while the weak and feeble person would fall many times even if there was nothing to bother him.

### **St. John Golden Mouth**

Because of this good gift of love the saints were not stressed by temptation. They were not confused by doubt nor did they perish when they were thrown. Rather, their temptations during the present moments worked for their benefit, building grand and boundless eternal glory. This present temptation can only be described as light moments for each of them. As for St. Paul and his ilk, they received God's perfect love in Jesus Christ that was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

### **St. Origen, the Scholar**

Stricken and narrow is the way which leads unto life but the reward is great and magnificent as we enter it in glory!

### **St. Cyprian**

O how useful are the temptations and the sufferings that many consider to be evil. Yet the saints never tried to avoid them. Rather, they truly asked for them with all their might, bravely bearing them to become God's beloved and to receive the crown of the eternal life.... The blessed apostle sang and said: "Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

### **Father Tadros**



As we struggle first in this world doing good deeds, we will then -- as God will reward us -- reach the Kingdom.

**Father Caseros, Bishop of Ari**

**Jesus did not deceive us:**

"But take ye heed; behold, I have foretold you all things" (Mark 13:23).

Ye beloved brothers, he who fights spiritually for the sake of God should know that he has been put in a heavenly camp unto the hope of receiving the divine reward. Thus he should not wear out from or shake before the worldly gales and storms for God has foretold us all what will happen unto us.

He foretold us about wars, famines, earthquakes and pestilences that will take place everywhere. With this talk He guided, taught, prepared and fortified His church to suffer and bear all what will come upon it.

He forewarned us that disasters will multiply towards the end of times so that we would not tremble from any deadly or unexpected dangers.

Behold, what He has foretold us is happening. As these things take place, they are also followed by what He has promised us when He said: "So likewise ye, when you see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:31).

Behold my dear brothers; the Kingdom of God has started to approach! With the passing of the world, behold the reward of life, the joy of eternal salvation and everlasting happiness and attainment of the lost Paradise!

Heavenly matters were prepared to replace earthly matters, great things instead of triviality and eternal matters instead of mortal matters. Thus, why worry and fear?

Who would see this and tremble in sorrow except he that is without hope or faith? He who does not wish to go to Christ or does not believe that he is on his way to reign with Christ forever would fear death!

It is written that the righteous lives by the faith. Thus, if you were righteous, you will live by the faith. If you truly believe in Christ, then why do you not embrace the confirmations of Christ's invitation for you and rejoice when you have rid yourself of Satan and have approached to dwell with Christ in Paradise?

**St. Cyprian**