

Meaning of Suffering, The: Warwick Leaflet

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"I swear by My life! Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall my loved ones. To this testifieth the Pen of God, the Most Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Best-Beloved."

Why do we Suffer?

Suffering comes to us for two reasons - either as a consequence of our own actions or as a test sent by God for our spiritual development.

The suffering we bring on ourselves can be physical suffering: "If a man eats too much, he ruins his digestion. If a person gambles he will lose his money."

Or it can be sadness or remorse caused by the way we have behaved or have treated others. Following the laws of God will free us from both these kinds of suffering:

"The source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure."

Suffering Develops the Soul

"Grief and sorrow do not come to us by chance, they are sent by the Divine Mercy for our own perfecting."

"Everything in life ministers to our development. Our lesson is to study and learn... Tests are either stumbling-blocks or stepping-stones, just as we make them."

"Anybody can be happy in the state of comfort, ease, health, success, pleasure and joy; but if one be happy and contented in the time of trouble, hardship and prevailing disease, it is the proof of nobility."

"Men who suffer not, attain no perfection. The plant most pruned by the gardeners is that one which, when the summer comes, will have the most beautiful blossoms and the most abundant fruit."

"Those who suffer most, attain to the greatest perfection..."

The Purpose of Life

Our purpose here on earth is to develop our souls so that we are ready for the next world. Tests and difficulties are necessary for this development.

"The one in pursuit of anything must undergo difficulties and hardships until the object in view is attained and the great success is obtained."

"The same test comes again in greater degree, until it is shown that a former weakness has become a strength..."

"The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness... Through suffering he will attain to an eternal happiness which nothing can take from him..."

"To attain eternal happiness one must suffer. He who has reached the state of self-sacrifice has true joy. "

"Be not in despair, but rather smile by the mercy of your Lord; and be not

sorrowful when meeting with worldly difficulties and depressions, for they pass away - and thine shall be immortality during ages and centuries, times and cycles."

Innocent Children

"As to the subject of babes and infants...who are afflicted...for those souls there is a recompense in another world...For those souls that suffering is the greatest mercy of God."

Patience and Acceptance

If we do not accept the problems which life presents us, and do not use them as means for our development, we will cause ourselves much unnecessary suffering.

"Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God."

"God hath never burdened any soul beyond its power."

"O Son of Spirit! Ask not of Me that which we desire not for thee, then be content with what we have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if therewith thou dost content thyself."

"...Tests are benefits from God, for which we should thank Him."

This is from a Bahá'í prayer:

"I beg of Thee, O my God,...O Thou in whose hands are both the visible and invisible kingdoms, to ordain that my choice be conformed to Thy choice, and my wish to Thy wish, that I may be entirely content with that which Thou didst desire, and be wholly satisfied with what Thou didst destine for me by Thy bounteousness and favour."

Live in the Spiritual World

"Today, humanity is bowed down with trouble, sorrow and grief, no-one escapes; the world is wet with tears; but thank God, the remedy is at our doors. Let us turn our hearts away from the world of matter and live in the spiritual world! It alone can give us freedom! If we are hemmed in by difficulties we have only to call upon God, and by His great Mercy we shall be helped...When our thoughts are filled with the bitterness of this world, let us turn our eyes to the sweetness of God's compassion and He will send us heavenly calm!"

"A man with his thoughts in this (spiritual) Kingdom knows perpetual joy. The ills all flesh is heir to do not pass him by, but they only touch the surface of his life, the depths are calm and serene."

Bahá'u'lláh's son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was in prison for 40 years because of His beliefs:

"But, thank God, during all those 40 years I was supremely happy. Every day, on waking, it was like hearing good tidings, and every night infinite joy was mine. Spirituality was my comfort, and turning to God was my greatest joy."

"I was happy in imprisonment. I was in the utmost elation, because I was not a criminal. They had imprisoned me in the path of God...I was happy that - praise be to God! - I was a prisoner in the cause of God, that my life was not wasted, that it was spent in divine service."

The Example of the Messengers of God

Each Messenger of God suffered for the sake of bringing His Message to humanity. Each One sacrificed His self totally to the will of God.

Bahá'u'lláh described His own sufferings as follows:

"The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most-Merciful."

"I sorrow not for the burden of My imprisonment. Neither do I grieve over My abasement, or the tribulation I suffer at the hands of mine enemies. By My Life! They are My glory, a glory wherewith God hath adorned His own self, would that ye knew it!"

The Desire for Suffering

If we really understand the purpose of our suffering in this life and how to use it, we will reach the stage where we long for tests in order to show our love for God and to draw closer to Him:

"The true lover yearneth for tribulation even as doth the rebel for forgiveness and the sinful for mercy."

"O Son of Man! If adversity befall thee not in My path, how canst thou walk in the ways of them that are content with My pleasure? If trials afflict thee not in thy longing to meet Me, how wilt thou attain the light in thy love for My beauty?"

"O Son of Man! My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit."

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All quotations are from the Bahá'í writings.

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