

## Pain & The Resurrection

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**Gospel: John 9:1-38:** *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he*

Sunday of the Blind Man \_\_\_\_\_ 1

*was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents:  
but that the works of God should be made manifest  
in him" (John 9:3)

The disciples asked Jesus this question. And this same question is asked every day: Why is this one born blind, and why is that one born paralyzed? Cases such as

these are more than numerous. The disciples asked this question to the Creator Himself! Why does man encounter much suffering and pain? In other words, what are these natural evils that accompany the life of man every moment, and why does this happen?

The life of man is a mixture of sickness and health, of pain and rest. Often the equation between these poles is not balanced. So man's life is colored with misery and he continues to ask this question, "Why was this person born blind?" What is then our view of pain after the event of the Resurrection? For some there are several solutions and answers to this problem. The disciples found the answer to the problem of pain by asking the Master, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"

If this one sinned, then the answer to the question and the solution to the problem of pain come through reincarnation. This man was born blind. Then, according to the logic that says he is a sinner, the man must have sinned in his previous life, before his last birth. So his blindness comes as a result of his past sinfulness.

If his parents sinned, then the explanation of the problem of pain has to rely on the belief in the inheritance of sin. The parents commit sins and the children pay for the parents' sinfulness. We are not surprised, since some Christians today believe in the inheritance of Original Sin. They believe that we all will be condemned because of our ancestors' sin. So we, the children of Adam, carry the punishment of Adam's sin.

Christ, however, responded to these two wrong conceptions by affirming that "Neither hath this man

sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

So there is actually another solution that does not believe in Reincarnation and does not take into account the inheritance of sin. Pain exists so that the name of God be glorified. At first, this answer seems to be very cruel. But Christ immediately clarified it by some movements he made. These movements remind us of the first act of creation. He gave life to the eyes of the blind man that never knew life, as He gave life in Paradise. He took dust from the ground, as He did in the beginning, and spat on the dust, as he breathed on it in the beginning as well. Through these movements, Jesus reveals that He is "remolding and renewing the creation."

We are still in the midst of this paschal season and we can clearly understand these expressions. To answer the questions of His disciples about why He permitted pain to exist in His creation, the Creator compared the first creation in Paradise to the second after the Resurrection.

In the first Creation, Adam was born immortal by Grace, not having any pain or suffering. He was born immortal not by nature but by Grace. So the first Adam was conditionally given the resurrection of the body, that is the immortality of the body. He was asked to perfect in Spirit the knowledge of God, that is the Resurrection of life.

But the fall of man had shown that the children of Adam are not capable of perfecting the body given to each one of them. The purpose of the perfection of the body and its immortality is the perfection of life, that is our spiritual resurrection.

Saint Gregory Nazianzus said that the immortality of an immoral body means the propagation of evil. In the mind of God, the immortality of the body is a way for the perfection of life. The fall of man had proved that this gift was not beneficial and that man had to perfect himself through pain. So after the Resurrection, we were introduced to the new way of perfection. Man had to be perfected spiritually first, than bodily. Ethical perfection ought to precede bodily perfection as an assurance. In other words we have to rise first spiritually, so that God bestows on us the Resurrection of the body. We have to be spiritually renewed so that spiritual bodies be given to us.

The Resurrection of Christ is a strong proof that we will be given these spiritual bodies, but what is asked from us now is to offer spiritual perfection. Before the spiritual body, we need to have spiritual perfection. The Resurrection of Christ is a pledge of this spiritual body. We have to be perfect in order to become worthy of it. This spiritual body demands from us all spiritual perfection. After it was shown that man could not achieve this through felicity, God opened the way for us to obtain this perfection through pain and death. After the Resurrection, Man offers a life of spiritual perfection because he awaits the pledge of the Resurrection, the perfection of his spiritual body.

The righteous and evil people will rise at the day of Judgement. The first Psalm says that the evil will not rise at the day of Judgement. This does not mean that they will not rise at all, but that they will not have the spiritual body to face the day of Judgement. At that time, we will all be immortal, but what immortality? Life is the knowledge of God. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is

firstly a proof that we are given, in a pledge, the immortality of the body; and secondly, that we are asked to live by the spirit and know Jesus Christ. The immortality of the body demands first that we live in Christ.

Why then was this man born blind? So that the name of God be glorified in Him. Why is there pain in the world? The pain is a call to take a painless body. But the real pain is to be in a body that knows no life in Christ. This latter situation is hell. It is clear from the story of the Samaritan Woman that the living water was for her the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Today's healing of the body and of blindness is a pledge of the general resurrection of the spiritual body. Christ told the man not to sin after he had been healed. Here, the blind man was shown the light, and he worshipped Christ. St. John Chrysostom says, "What is the harm of the blindness of this blind man when it took him to the knowledge of Jesus, and what is the benefit from the vision of his parents when their fleshly vision did not permit them to know Christ?" The first found life through pain, and the others lost life, being healthy and without pain."

The Resurrection of Christ solves the problem of pain in the world. The sufferings are not catastrophes. The sufferings are a call to repentance and to the renewal of the spiritual life. It is a call to repentance. Pain is a way to the spiritual life. Pain reminds us first of the first Adam who did not know it, and second of the immortal body that awaits us. It reminds us of our return to grow to the full stature of Jesus Christ, so that we be in this stature in the likeness of His spiritual body. Pain then is a way to make our spiritual mold be worthy again of the spiritual body.

Truly, pain exists so that God's name may be glorified.

Amen.