

In Praise of Pain  
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

*“Pain may be God’s megaphone to a morally death world.” CS Lewis*

Few words are ever spoken in praise of pain, but it is not the great enemy it often appears to be. Pain can be a friend. It is the body’s early warning system. Pain sends a message which must be heard, and when heard, heeded.

Dr. Paul Brand, a specialist in the study of pain, tells how those suffering from leprosy lose all sensation of distress. Instead of bringing peace to mind and body, this eventually leads to the loss of fingers, toes and other extremities without any realization of what is happening. Without pain, one’s appendix could burst without warning, leading to a quick death.

In order to have a world without pain we could begin by eliminating both fire and water. Why? Because in today’s world people can drown in water and suffer terrible burns by fire. But how could we live without these basic ingredients?

The trials of life teach us some of the basic lessons of being human. Those who have little or no experience of pain are often lacking in compassion or sympathy toward others. Absolute freedom from suffering is not the road to happiness. No pain no gain!

Much of the suffering in this world is self-inflicted, caused by mankind’s free will revolt against God. So, why didn’t God make us like puppets, or robots with no freedom of choice. That would diminish the amount of suffering in our world. But, a robot cannot express love, and there is no real communication with a puppet. Although free will makes evil possible, it is the only thing that makes feasible any love and character worth having.

I feel that I must add that no one has a totally convincing answer to the problem of pain. Nor will it help to turn to atheism and deny the existence of God. This only leaves us in complete darkness and with no hope or meaning about pain. People of faith may not have all the answers but they can affirm, through their tears, that God is working behind the scenes so that nothing is permitted to come to them except what is or can be used for their highest good.

Christianity points us to a God who cares and can help us in time of need. Christ, by virtue of his own suffering is able to help us in our hour of trial (Hebrews 2: 17, 18).

Dr. George Matheson was engaged to be married to a young lady from Scotland. He was having serious trouble with his eyesight and was informed by a specialist that nothing more could be done to prevent total blindness. When George informed his fiancée, her heart froze, saying that she could never love a blind

man. At first he was devastated but later while alone and brooding over his sorrow he felt inspired to compose these words:

“Oh joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to Thee.  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
and know the promise is not vain,  
That morn shall tearless be.”