

Pain and Sorrow

And this, O my God, is from naught but Thy hidden bounties.

Bahá'u'lláh

1. 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. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh: XLV

2. We have heard that sorrows have compassed thee round in these days. Thy sorrow hath grieved Us, and that which hath befallen thee hath touched Us with bitter pain and anguish. But at this moment, O friend, the Herald of eternity announceth unto thee, by the robe of faithfulness, His joyful tidings and bestoweth upon thee this emerald-green Tablet. Set out, then, from thine abode, take thou seven steps upon the earth, and with each step complete a stage of the journey.

With the first, enter the ocean of search and seek God, thy Lord, with thine inmost heart and soul.

With the second, enter the ocean of love and make mention of God, thy Lord, in the transports of thy longing and the ecstasies of thy rapture.

With the third, tread the paths of detachment; that is, sever thyself from thine idle fancies and walk in the ways of thy Lord.

3. With the fourth, enter the fathomless depths of oneness and the billowing seas of eternity. Cover thy face in the dust before the Lord of Lords, and sanctify thy self and thy spirit from all departure and return, that thine inmost heart may be freed from all things in the kingdoms of creation.

With the fifth, ascend unto the heaven of wonderment, that thou mayest taste the goodly fruits of this blessed realm, lose thyself in bewilderment before the power of thy Beloved and the dominion of thy Creator, and proclaim that which the King of existence and the Goal of all desire hath proclaimed: "Increase my wonder and amazement at Thee, O God!"⁸¹

With the sixth, soar upon the wings of submission and contentment unto the cities of the Unseen, that thou mayest enter the expanses of utter nothingness wherein thou shalt die to thy self and live in Him Who hath fashioned thee.

4. With the seventh, drown thyself in the depths of eternity, that death may not overtake thee, and that thou mayest abide forever in the shadow of the everlasting Face of God. Thereupon shall the fragrance of the All-Glorious be diffused from the realm of the All-Merciful, and thy heart shall grieve no more over the vicissitudes of a fleeting life and the turns of a transient fortune.

When once thou hast privily completed these journeys, place this robe upon thy sightless eyes, that the eye of thine inmost heart may be opened. By God, O My friend! Wert thou to attain unto this station, thou wouldst find wondrous worlds; discover heavenly bowers, celestial gardens, and transcendent realms; and unravel the secrets of the progress of the souls of men through the atmosphere of eternal holiness and the heavens of imperishable glory. Thou wouldst so rejoice within thy soul as to cause the signs of joy and gladness to

appear throughout the whole earth. Thereafter, sorrow would never again hold sway over thee, nor would grief ever seize thee in its grasp, for thou wouldst abide in the heaven of holiness amidst the concourse of the blissful.

Bahá'u'lláh, *The Call of the Divine Beloved* / Three Other Tablets

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Writings from *Paris Talks*: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l Bahá in Paris, France, 1911

#### 5. The Imprisonment of 'Abdu'l Bahá: October 25

I regret much that I have kept you waiting this morning, but I have so much to do in a short time for the Cause of the love of God.

You will not mind having waited a little to see me. I have waited years and years in prison, that I might come to see you now.

Above all, God be praised, our hearts are always in unison, and with one aim are drawn to the love of God. By the Bounty of the Kingdom our desires, our hearts, our spirits, are they not united in one bond? Our prayers, are they not for the gathering together of all men in harmony? Therefore are we not always together?

6. Yesterday evening when I came home from the house of Monsieur Dreyfus I was very tired—yet I did not sleep, I lay awake thinking.

I said, O God, Here am I in Paris! What is Paris and who am I? Never did I dream that from the darkness of my prison I should ever be able to come to you, though when they read me my sentence I did not believe in it.

They told me that 'Abdu'l-Hamíd had ordered my everlasting imprisonment, and I said, "This is impossible! I shall not always be a prisoner. If 'Abdu'l-Hamíd were

immortal, such a sentence might possibly be carried out. It is certain that one day I shall be free. My body may be captive for a time, but 'Abdu'l-Hamíd has no power over my spirit—free it must remain—that can no man imprison."

Released from my prison by the Power of God I meet here the friends of God, and I am thankful unto Him.

7. Let us spread the Cause of God, for which I suffered persecution.

What a privilege it is for us to meet here in freedom. How happy for us that God has so decided that we may work together for the coming of the Kingdom!

Are you pleased to receive such a guest, freed from his prison to bring the glorious Message to you? He who never could have thought such a meeting possible! Now by the Grace of God, by His wonderful Power, I, who was condemned to perpetual imprisonment in a far off town of the East, am here in Paris talking with you!

Henceforward we shall always be together, heart and soul and spirit, pressing forward in the work till all men are gathered together under the tent of the Kingdom, singing the songs of peace.

#### 8. Pain and Sorrow: November 22

In this world we are influenced by two sentiments, Joy and Pain.

Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness. But when sadness visits us we become weak, our strength leaves us, our comprehension is dim and our intelligence veiled. The actualities of life seem to elude our grasp,

the eyes of our spirits fail to discover the sacred mysteries, and we become even as dead beings.

There is no human being untouched by these two influences; but all the sorrow and the grief that exist come from the world of matter—the spiritual world bestows only the joy!

If we suffer it is the outcome of material things, and all the trials and troubles come from this world of illusion. ...

9. I myself was in prison forty years—one year alone would have been impossible to bear—nobody survived that imprisonment more than a year! But, thank God, during all those forty 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. If this had not been so, do you think it possible that I could have lived through those forty years in prison?

Thus, spirituality is the greatest of God's gifts, and "Life Everlasting" means "Turning to God." May you, one and all, increase daily in spirituality, may you be strengthened in all goodness, may you be helped more and more by the Divine consolation, be made free by the Holy Spirit of God, and may the power of the Heavenly Kingdom live and work among you.

This is my earnest desire, and I pray to God to grant you this favor.

10. Pure and sanctified art Thou, O my God! How can the pen move and the ink flow after the breezes of loving-kindness have ceased, and the signs of bounty have vanished, when the sun of abasement hath risen, and the swords of calamity are drawn, when the heavens of sorrow have been

upraised, and the darts of affliction and the lances of vengeance have rained from the clouds of power — in such wise that the signs of joy have departed from all hearts, and the tokens of gladness have been erased from every horizon, the gates of hope have been shut, the mercy of the supernal breeze hath ceased to waft over the rose-garden of faithfulness, and the whirlwind of extinction hath struck the tree of existence. The pen is groaning, and the ink bewaileth its plight, and the tablet is awestruck at this cry. The mind is in turmoil from the taste of this pain and sorrow, and the divine Nightingale calleth: "Alas! Alas! for all that hath been made to appear." And this, O my God, is from naught but Thy hidden bounties.

—Bahá'u'lláh

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### Personal Prayers

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### Reflections on the Text

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### Discussion