

## **The Doubts And Offences Of Human Reason Concerning The Suffering And Death Of The Son Of God.**

Text: Luke 18:31-43

1) In What These Doubts And Offences Consist

Suggested Hymns:

2) How They Are Removed

159, 354, 395, 396, 127

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 18:31-43, <sup>31</sup> *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.*

<sup>32</sup> *For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon.* <sup>33</sup> *They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."* <sup>34</sup> *But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.*

<sup>35</sup> *Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging.* <sup>36</sup> *And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant.* <sup>37</sup> *So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.* <sup>38</sup> *And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* <sup>39</sup> *Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

<sup>40</sup> *So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him,* <sup>41</sup> *saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?"* He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." <sup>42</sup> *Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."* <sup>43</sup> *And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

*“They understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.”* This is what St. Luke has to say of the disciples, after the Lord had told them in plain words that now they were going to Jerusalem, and that there He must suffer and die.

None of these things they understood. How is this to be accounted for? Could the Lord speak any plainer than He did? Were not His words as clear and simple as they could be, to communicate to them the information that He was to suffer and to die?

*“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup> For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. <sup>33</sup> They will scourge Him and kill Him.”* How can it be possible for anyone not to understand such plain and simple language? The Lord certainly spoke to them in their own native language. And this they did not understand? What are we to make of that?

The solution of this problem is obvious. St. Luke does not say that they did not understand the words. These they understood perfectly well. They comprehended as well as we do that the Lord spoke of His suffering and death. St. Luke says, <sup>34</sup> *But they understood none of these THINGS.*”

How their Lord and Master would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles to suffer and to die — this is what they could not comprehend. It was incompatible with their opinion of the Messiah and His glorious kingdom. They expected to go to Jerusalem and see Jesus throned as the great King of Israel to inaugurate a new era for the Jewish nation.

Their own human reason revolted at the idea that Jesus, who more than once had miraculously escaped the murderous grasp of His enemies, would now be delivered into their hands, and that He, who had in thousands of cases soothed the pains and healed the diseases of others, and had even restored to life the dead, would now undergo torments and sufferings and Himself be slain.

And to this day human reason is prone to doubt and to be offended in the sufferings and death of our beloved Saviour. Let us, therefore, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit, consider, *The Doubts And Offences Of Human Reason*

*Concerning The Suffering And Death Of The Son Of God.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. In What These Doubts And Offences Consist**

Though the disciples could not help understanding the literal meaning of Christ's words when He said, "***Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. <sup>32</sup> For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. <sup>33</sup> They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again,***" still this saying was hid to them.

Doubts entered their minds as to the true meaning of these words. They took it for granted that these words could not be taken in a literal sense.

And what were their doubts? They evidently considered it both impossible and unnecessary that their Lord and Master should suffer and die.

Impossible they deemed it. Had they not heard Jesus say time and again that He was the true Son of the living God? Had they not seen with their own eyes that nothing in this world could withstand His divine power? Had they not recognised in Jesus the divine Master who conquered all diseases, all the demons of hell, and even death? And they seen how often had His enemies attempted both with force and with trickery to apprehend and to kill Him!

At Nazareth they had led Jesus to the brow of the hill on which the city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. And how did Jesus escape? Passing through the midst of them He went His way.

At Jerusalem they had sent officers to take Jesus prisoner. The officers went and found Him preaching in the market place. His divine words so affected them that they could not lay hands upon Him. Upon their return, being asked, "***Why have you not brought Him?***" they answered, "***No man ever spoke like this Man!***"<sup>1</sup>

In the temple the Jews had gone sheer mad when the Lord declared to them, "***Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.***"<sup>2</sup> They took up stones, stood around Him in a circle, and made preparations to stone Him to death. He seemed doomed right then and there.

And how did Jesus escape? Majestically going through the midst of them, He passed out of the temple. No arm was able to move, no stone was hurled at Him. Of such things had the disciples been eyewitnesses. Hence their doubts as to the possibility of Christ's falling into the hands of His enemies to suffer and to die.

Moreover, they also doubted the necessity of Christ's suffering and death. From the days of their youth they had been taught that the Messiah would establish a glorious worldly kingdom and rule over all the nations.

All along the Lord had been instructing them and telling them that His kingdom was not of this world. But they held onto their ideas of Christ's worldly kingdom. What necessity was there for Him to undergo such things as to suffer, and to die, and to rise again from the dead?

Could Jesus not ascend to the throne of David without doing Himself such harm? These, evidently, were their doubts as to the necessity of Christ's suffering and death. And so deeply were these doubts entrenched in their minds as to make it impossible for them to understand the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, until the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them and guided them into all truth.

From the disciples we learn that human reason can comprehend neither the possibility nor the necessity of Christ's suffering and death. The deep humiliation of the Son of God is a mystery which human reason can neither fathom nor reveal. It is and it always has been a stumbling-block to human reason that Jesus would suffer and die on the cross and, at the same time, be the eternal Son of God.

History proves and experience confirms it. Nothing the Jews and the Gentiles in the days of the apostles considered more foolish and ridiculous than to hear the Christians call Jesus their God and Saviour, who had been betrayed by one of His own disciples, mocked, spitefully treated, spat on, scourged, and finally nailed to the cross, and killed like a common criminal.

The same objections to the Bible's statements concerning the suffering and death of God's eternal Son are made in the name of human reason and common sense to this day. How can that be possible? says the voice of human reason.

Jesus of Nazareth, the homeless man, who had nowhere to lay His head; who fled before His persecutors; who lay upon His knees in Gethsemane sorrowful and deeply distressed;<sup>3</sup> who was altogether helpless in the hands of His enemies; who was taken captive and bound by the officers, and elders, and chief priests; who was condemned to death, ill-treated, scourged, crucified; who Himself complained that God had forsaken Him, and died such an ignominious death — how could this unfortunate man be the Son of God?

How can that be possible? And even if it was possible — says the voice of human reason — where is the necessity for such proceedings? The great God, that Supreme Being, who created heaven and earth, who is exalted above all things, who lives in a state of glory and majesty which no mortal tongue can describe; would He descend from the throne of His divine glory and become man for the purpose of permitting Himself to be spitefully treated by a lawless mob, to be buffeted by the vile hands of violent people, chastised, mocked, murdered?

Would God, the God of love, be so cruel as to lay upon His beloved Son the burden of the whole sinful world, all the sins and transgressions of the human race, and have Him suffer the most excruciating pains, and shed His blood in streams, and die a miserable death?

Could not the Almighty have devised some other plan to redeem and save the lost human race than with the blood of His own Son? These, my friends, are the doubts and objections and offences of human reason concerning the suffering and death of the Son of God.

## **2. How They Are Removed.**

And now, in the second place, let us see how these doubts and offences may be removed.

Concerning the first doubt and offence of human reason, the possibility of Jesus' suffering and death, we must admit that Jesus could not be the Son of God, if accidentally He had fallen into the hands of His enemies and had suffered as a powerless victim to their relentless enmity.

How could an accident, how could any unforeseen event, or fate, disturb the plans of the omniscient God? How could human craftiness outwit divine wisdom? How could any power upon earth conquer the Almighty God and reverse His decrees?

But the foundation of this doubt and offence has been removed long ago by the Scriptures. For the Scriptures tell us that Jesus did not fall into the hands of His enemies unaware, or because fate had suddenly turned against Him. The Scriptures tell us that Jesus did not suffer and die unwillingly, but willingly, according to God's eternal counsel, and to fulfil the Scriptures.

Read the Old Testament, and you will find that for a period of four thousand years God had been proclaiming to the world that His Son would become man to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Even the minutest occurrences connected with His suffering and death are foretold in the Old Testament.

And did not Christ Himself show before all people that He could have escaped and that He was able to resist? Not only did He halt the hands of those who wanted to throw Him from the rock at Nazareth, and of those who wanted to stone Him in the temple, but even in the hour of His deepest humiliation He exhibited His divine power.

Scarcely had He risen to His feet from that terrible struggle in Gethsemane, when His majestic words, "***I am He,***" made the motley crowd, which came to take Him captive, go backward and fall to the ground.

Jesus healed the ear of Malchus which Peter had cut off with his sword, and by the simple words, "***If you seek Me, let these go their way,***"<sup>4</sup> He gained freedom for His disciples. Had Jesus only been willing to do so, He could easily have laid all His enemies prostrate at His feet, and could even have descended from the cross, and transformed that scene of His humiliation into a scene of glory and triumph.

But it was of His own will that He consented to reconcile to God the sinful world by His suffering and death. Willingly He came into this world. Willingly He took upon Himself the form of a servant. Willingly, and well knowing everything that was in store for Him, He undertook His last journey to Jerusalem to fulfil all things said by the prophets concerning the Son of man.

Where is there any room now for human reason to come in with its doubts and offences concerning the possibility of Jesus' suffering and death? They are all removed by the fact that Jesus suffered willingly.

But, says human reason, was all this necessary? Could the merciful God not devise some other plan, a plan not so cruel to save the human race?

The Scriptures remove also this second offence. The Scriptures tell us that God is not only merciful, but also just and holy, that His justice demands full punishment of the transgressors. He cannot be merciful at the expense of His justice and holiness. He cannot forgive sin in such a way as to act as if sin was nothing serious.

God Himself did not take any pleasure in the cruelty that was connected with the noble sacrifice of His beloved Son for the fallen human race; but this had to be in order, to fully atone for the sins of all people and to satisfy the demands of divine justice.

It is true, by nature we have correct ideas neither of the damnableness of sin nor of the strictness of God's justice. We read in Hebrews 9:22 that *without shedding of blood there is no remission.*

By nature we are disposed to look upon sin, as if it was merely a sort of weakness for which we are not so much to blame. We are inclined to look on the great God in heaven, as if He was an over-good and lenient Father who overlooks the wrongs of His children and lets their misdoings go unpunished.

Hence, to become perfectly convinced of the necessity of Jesus' blood stained atonement for our sins we must, first of all, be enlightened by the holy Word of God.

All the doubts and offences concerning the necessity of Jesus' suffering and death will be hushed in the person who yields to the influence of the divine Word. This we may learn from the latter part of our Gospel.

There we read, "<sup>35</sup> *Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging.* <sup>36</sup> *And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant.* <sup>37</sup> *So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.* <sup>38</sup> *And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* <sup>39</sup> *Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

<sup>40</sup> *So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him,* <sup>41</sup> *saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?"* He said, *"Lord, that I may receive my sight."* <sup>42</sup> *Then Jesus said to*

*him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”<sup>43</sup> And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God.*

This wonderful event, which occurred immediately after the disciples had been made aware of their own spiritual blindness in the matter concerning the Lord’s suffering and death, goes to show how the natural man may be cured of his spiritual blindness, so as to become perfectly convinced of the necessity of Jesus’ suffering and death.

Like the blind man he must, first of all, know that he is blind spiritually, and then call upon Jesus the Saviour to help him, and to enlighten him with His Word and Spirit, so that he may see, that he may see the wonders of God’s grace and mercy exhibited in the pains and suffering of the dying Saviour.

O blessed is the person who calls upon Jesus, as did that blind man! Jesus will hear his prayer and remove from him all those doubts which his own human reason may produce concerning the Lord’s holy passion.

The history of the Lord’s passion is to be to us a source of life and salvation, a crystal fountain from where the healing streams flow that will comfort us in life and in death.

May the Lord grant to us all His divine blessing during the coming season of Lent, and strengthen our faith, while we prayerfully contemplate the sacred story of our suffering and dying Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> John 7:46-47

<sup>2</sup> John 8:58

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 26:37

<sup>4</sup> John 18:8