

## **No pain, no gain**

Reincarnationists are divided on the issue of whether we come to earth in order to "make progress" or mainly just to diversify our experience. Most of the testimony I have seen indicates that there are different "levels" in heaven which are not accessible to all. I would equate this with the biblical understanding that there are different levels of exaltation and rewards in heaven, as well as different levels of regret for those who, metaphorically speaking, are not yet ready for entrance into the kingdom. The grace of God has nothing at all to do with handing out rewards in heaven. It has nothing to do with removing the need for correction and guidance. It mostly has to do with the fact that regardless of our sinful condition we are loved by God and God holds no animosity towards us. All who desire are freely received into God's loving presence after death. Not all are given the same level of responsibility in the heavenly places. Not all are at the same level of perfection. It is true that we all start out perfect as spirit children of God. But this I would equate with the kind of "innocence" that earthly children start out with. God then sends us out into the world to gain wisdom and experience and learn by doing. We start out as neither good nor bad, only innocent. We can't become good unless we first experience what it is like to not be good. It's all about contrast. By exposing ourselves to good and evil we gain an understanding of both and learn over time how to consistently choose goodness over evil. The only place where we can truly learn to love as God loves, which is sacrificially, is in a place where love is most needed, where there is sin and suffering. I know this is counterintuitive, but it makes sense to me. The more we experience the pain and sorrow of an earthly type existence, the more opportunity we have to learn how to overcome it and rise above it, and the more opportunity we have to hone our loving skills as we express agape, self-sacrificing love.