

The Two Sacrifices

Cameron Ford
March 24, 2024

We are taught that when God the Father presented His plan in the premortal world, that He said that, if His children yielded to temptation, He would give unto them the Law of Sacrifice and provide a Savior for them that thereby they might come forth by the redemption and the resurrection and with them partake of Eternal Life and Exaltation. Therefore, this teaching indicates that the Savior's atoning sacrifice together with our own personal sacrifices, are the two central elements in our own personalized plan of salvation. We as Latter Day Saints are very familiar with the overwhelming importance of the atoning sacrifice made by the Lord. However, I sometimes wonder if we understand the critical importance that our own personal sacrifices play, not as a means of earning our salvation, but rather as the only mechanism through which we can fully receive the blessings of the Lord's atonement?

The Law of Sacrifice is defined as making an offering of a broken heart, and a contrite spirit, sacrificing to obey God's laws, and sacrificing all else that God requires of us, that we might become holy and without spot through the atonement of Jesus Christ. Note that the Law of Sacrifice is not sacrifice just for the sake of sacrifice, which practice I believe can lead to dangerous fanaticism, mental imbalance, and even evil. Rather, it is sacrifice to be obedient to the will of God.

My address today focuses on how we can successfully and productively endure those sacrifices that God requires of us.

The Law of Sacrifice can be found in every standard work of the Church. Here is a sampling of a few of them:

- In the Old Testament in Psalms (50:5) “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice”
- In the Pearl of Great Price in Moses (5:6): “Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said: I know not save the Lord commanded me”
- In Doctrine and Covenants (97:8): “... all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord shall command—they are accepted of me”
- In the Book of Mormon (Alma 22:18) the father of Lamoni declared “I will give away all my sins to know thee” and in the book of Omni (1:26) Amaleki urges us, “I would that ye should come unto Christ, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him... and endure to the end;”

This last scripture in the Book of Mormon brings to mind a teaching given in a book called the Lectures on Faith, which was written by the early brethren to be a part of the original published edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, as the “Doctrine” portion of the book, with the revelations of the Prophet Joseph being the “Covenant” portion of the book. In lecture 6 of this book, it states:

“Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation”

This overarching sacrifice is pointed to, in one degree or another, by all five covenants of the Temple endowment: The Law of Obedience, the Law of Sacrifice,

the Law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Law of Chastity, and the Law of Consecration. I believe that one of the main purposes of the endowment is to put us on the path to making this overall sacrifice.

The requirement of the sacrifice of all things makes perfect sense when we realize that:

1. God's purpose is to transform us into beings like unto himself.
2. We are so far from being like God that virtually everything about us will eventually need to change, and...
3. That He will not force this transformation on anyone against their will.

Therefore, each of us will eventually be required to willingly surrender every part of ourselves, so that God can turn us into something that is so much better.

This teaching is beautifully set forth by the Christian author C. S. Lewis in his parable about the plans that Christ has for us when we invite him into the house our heart (Mere Christianity, pg 205). In this parable, the Lord is planning on transforming the house of our heart into a palace, not a cottage, and with that kind of renovation to our souls, it is inevitable that we will experience some severe discomfort, challenging growing pains, and be stretched far beyond our comfort zones.

I realize that this is pretty heavy stuff. When we as disciples finally realize the full extent of what the Lord plans for us, and the personal effort it will require, it can be

overwhelming, depressing, and frankly at times, feel completely impossible.

However, we can all take heart when we realize that all this does not necessarily need to take place during mortality. The Prophet Joseph taught that:

“...it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned [all the principles of exaltation]. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.”

God has infinite patience, is willing to wait until we are ready, and values effort above all else, no matter how small. So, no matter how many times we stumble and fall short during our mortal journeys, as long as we eventually repent and try again to align our lives with Him, He will continue to work with us and forgive us. As we follow this process of repenting daily, we will slowly come to understand His true character, unveil His face (D&C 93:1), and experience real joy; for to come to know God is to come to know true joy.

However, even though much of our learning will occur on the other side of the veil, there is one type of sacrifice that I believe is unique to mortality. This sacrifice is implied by the teaching of the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Romans:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that **we suffer with him**, that we may be also glorified together.” - Romans 8:16-17

Of the many unique aspects of Christ's sufferings that sets him apart from the sufferings of anyone else, the one that often stands out the most to me was that these sufferings were completely undeserved, totally unfair, and entirely unjust. In the history of the world there has never been a person that has deserved their sufferings less than God's loving, humble, faithful, kind, and perfect, only begotten son. This means that we are never more like our Savior than when we also endure suffering that is undeserved, unfair, and unjust. And due to the agency of others, natural processes, and random chance, it seems that earth life was almost specifically designed to create exactly this kind of suffering.

A very incomplete list of this kind of suffering might include:

- Rape, incest, or the sexual trafficking of children and women.
- The inhumanity and unnecessary destruction of war.
- Injury, loss of life, or property loss due to natural disasters.
- The untimely loss of a young child, spouse, or loved one.
- Infidelity, abuse, or abandonment by a spouse.
- Lifelong mental illness.
- Debilitating health problems, the sudden appearance of cancer, or serious accidents that leave us incapacitated.
- Experiencing attraction to the same sex and being required to live the Lord's definition of the Law of Chastity.
- Overwhelming feelings that you were born as the wrong gender, and yet the Lord still asking you to accept the gender you were born into.
- Desperately desiring to be married, but never finding a companion.
- Couples that long for children that never come.
- Divorce and heartache that we never desired, and worked hard to avoid.
- Poverty, financial hardship caused by others, or being laid off from our jobs.

This list could go on and on. How can we best deal with this kind of suffering? As in everything, Christ shows us the way. When, within the bounds the Lord has set, we have done all we can to relieve our suffering, pled with the Lord to remove these bitter cups, and yet they still remain; if we, like Christ, will submit to the Father, and place these sufferings upon the altar of sacrifice, through the miracle of Christ's atonement, He will be able to use this suffering to sanctify us, enlarge our souls, increase our compassion toward our fellowman, and further our progression toward becoming like Him. This process is described in President Joseph F. Smith's great revelation on the spirit world, where it is said that those souls that were in paradise, were "...the spirits of the just... who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the sacrifice of the Son of God." -D&C 138:13

And the important point to remember here, is that mortality will force this kind of suffering upon us regardless of our preferences. Our only choice is in how we will endure them. Will we allow these bitter cups to make us hopeless, dark, bitter, and cynical? Or will we place them on the altar and through that act allow Christ to use them to transform us into something beautiful? The choice is ours.

At this point, I would like to provide a caution. There is no good that can come by comparing our own required sacrifices with those of our neighbors. This is because:

1. We have no idea what is really going on in the lives of others. Their suffering could easily be equal to, or exceed our own, and we would have no idea.
2. In the calculus of the eternities, we have good reason to believe that the price will be the same for everyone that receives all that the Father has. In the Lectures on Faith, it says: “It is vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice..., unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice.”

I believe this comparing problem is often where our brothers and sisters that experience gender dysphoria or same sex attraction often get hung up. They believe that the Lord’s requirements in their regard are especially unfair compared to the requirements of other members of the church. Especially when it would be so easy for the Lord to use His power to either change their inclinations, or change His laws. So too have millions of others pled with the Father to remove their own specialized bitter cups, and like His answer to Christ, have all been answered by a loving, all knowing, and broken-hearted Heavenly Father that for them, there is no other way.

This will inevitably be the hardest task that any of us face in our lives. However, I believe that when we eventually stand in the presence of God and fully understand

and feel of His overwhelming love, generosity, and the enormous magnitude of His gift to us, we will be struck with wonder and awe at how little we were asked to endure in comparison to what we have been given.

We have been promised that as we exercise faith in Christ, that through His grace we will be given strength to overcome our trials, and be enabled to do all that God asks of us. With all my heart I hope and pray that we will all choose to exercise this kind of faith, and through it find the strength and courage to place our own bitter cups on the altar of sacrifice, so that through them we can be transformed and sanctified by His holy power.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.