

Between Two Gardens: The Law of Sacrifice

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Today I wish to talk about significant events that occurred in the proximity of two gardens: the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Gethsemane. Those events, and the spiritual and doctrinal issues that connect the two gardens, are among the most important we could discuss. I, therefore, title this presentation “Between Two Gardens.”

After Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, they began to till the fields and have dominion over the beasts of the fields. They were directed, as are we, to eat by the sweat of their labor. Among other commandments, they were directed to build an altar and to offer sacrifice unto the Lord. The account reads:

And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me.

And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth. [Moses 5:6–7]

Thus, the law of sacrifice was introduced as an important set of instructions by which

Adam and Eve could come to personally understand and know the Lord Jesus Christ. The law of sacrifice was intended as a process to teach Adam and Eve about the great sacrifice of the Son of God.

Now consider the events of another garden: the Garden of Gethsemane. In a prayer offered just before he entered the garden, Jesus declared that the fundamental requirement of eternal life is for each person to come to know Him after they first come to know the Father. “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

The principles that connect these two important “garden” events are fundamental to our understanding of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Without this understanding, our full participation in the mission of the Church and the development of our personal testimonies are very restricted. For as Alma the prophet taught:

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And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal. [Alma 34:14]

Recently I had a meeting with two very important Jewish rabbis who are responsible for the administration of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Tolerance in Los Angeles, California. They were interested in exploring the possibility of having access to our family history software and database as part of their facility.

During our visit we enjoyed a long discussion on the subject of the law of sacrifice. I asked my two rabbinical friends about the Jewish belief concerning the doctrine and practice of the law of sacrifice. Both confirmed their deep conviction that the law continues to be a requirement for every Jew. They explained their understanding of the biblical context of the law of sacrifice. Yet, they confessed, “We do not know how to practice sacrifice. We are quite certain that our people would reject the notion of killing animals in our temples and synagogues. We do not dare bring back the practice of sacrifice, but we confirm that it is a requirement for all Jews.”

What do we, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, know about the law of sacrifice? What do we know about the doctrine and application of the law of sacrifice in our individual lives? In the Book of Mormon we read:

And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. [3 Nephi 9:19–20]

The Prophet Joseph Smith made the following declaration:

It is generally supposed that sacrifice was entirely done away when the Great Sacrifice [i.e.,] the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in [the] future; but those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges and authority of the Priesthood, or with the Prophets.

The offering of sacrifice has ever been connected and forms a part of the duties of the Priesthood. [Teachings, p. 172]

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we believe that the law of sacrifice is an important element in each of our lives. Our doctrine is that the very purpose of life is to come unto Christ and to live His commandments. The prophets have taught clearly that a knowledge of God and His Son are the essence of this mortal life and of life eternal. All of us, along with my Jewish friends, would question the slaughtering of an animal in one of our sacred meetings. Since the great sacrifice of the Son of God ended sacrifice by the shedding of the blood of animals, how have we been taught to live the law of sacrifice? Let us examine only a part of that which we have been taught by living prophets on this important subject.

Sacrifice of a Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit

What is the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit that the Lord has commanded? Qualities such as humble, teachable, sensitive, submissive, obedient, considerate, polite, respectful, repentant, and prayerful would be part of this great concept.

What about prayer? Some elements of the law of sacrifice seem almost hidden but, upon examination, clearly have the qualities of sacrifice. For example, Paul taught: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Hebrews 13:15).

In this world of macho public figures and the ever-growing importance of winning, it becomes a challenge to ignore the temptation to join the crowd. Many of us, in our desire to win, appear to have lost the grace of appreciation for our opposing contestants. Chivalry as part of the character of mighty men has almost disappeared. "In your face" has replaced the pleasure of an outstanding and well-performed athletic achievement. Taunting and trash talk has replaced the fun and friendly spirit of competition, which is one of the reasons for which sports were designed.

Many have been shocked by the behavior of spectators at sporting events where opposing players and associates are subjected to vicious verbal abuse and even physical abuse. We develop a sense of disdain for other universities, other cultures, and other people in our desire to defeat them in what we formerly considered just games.

Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. [D&C 59:8]

As we have just read, a broken heart and a contrite spirit is the sacrifice upon which all other elements of the law of sacrifice are based. Indeed, Cain did make his offering (see Genesis 4:5), but he did it without the appropriate attitude of a contrite spirit and a broken heart. Because of his arrogance the Lord rejected his offering, and you know the rest of the story.

Sacrifice of Repentance

Repentance is likewise based upon the sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. While serving on my first mission, my companion and I were privileged to teach the wonderful family of Tony and Norma Johnson. This family lived in Ellesmere Port, England. One of the missionary discussions suggested that a truly repentant person would want to

confess all of his wrongdoings to the Lord in prayer. The discussion suggested that a large blanket confession was inadequate because an individual should confess all sins in some detail.

Three days later, we again visited with the Johnson family. Brother Johnson, then Mr. Johnson, looked terrible. When we asked him what was wrong, he informed us that he had not slept for three nights. He indicated that he would finish one prayer, get into bed, and then remember some other event or thought that he felt should be part of his confession prayer. He then would get out of bed and ask forgiveness for another wrongdoing.

I left our meeting that evening knowing I had *never* spent three nights on my knees asking for forgiveness. I had never come to that level of prayer when asking for forgiveness. It was required even of the Prophet Joseph: "Let no one, therefore, set on my servant Joseph; for I will justify him; for he shall do the sacrifice which I require at his hands for his transgressions, saith the Lord your God" (D&C 132:60).

Sacrifice of Tithes and Offerings

I now read from D&C 64:23 and the heading to section 119:

Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming. [D&C 64:23]

The term "tithing" . . . just quoted and in previous revelations (64:23; 85:3; 97:11) had meant not just one-tenth, but all free-will offerings, or contributions, to the Church funds. [D&C 119, section heading]

Sister Brough and I remember a time during our university years when poverty was a regular part of our daily lives. Some of you

students may know what I mean. I suggested that we might consider carefully the choice between starvation and paying tithing. She, however, was firm in her commitment to pay tithing, and she prevailed. We continued to make our financial offering. Tithing was a sacrifice, more to me than to her, during that time of financial challenge.

Since those years, because of the sacrifice of tithing, our testimonies and faith have continued to grow. Why? Because the law of tithing is part of the law of sacrifice. We have learned that even the law of tithing is designed to teach us about the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Sacrifice of Obedience

In what other ways do we learn from and practice the law of sacrifice? Consider the following text from D&C 132: “Behold, I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins; I have seen your sacrifices in obedience to that which I have told you” (D&C 132:50; see also 1 Samuel 15:22).

Obedience is a great and important part of the law of sacrifice. It is the law that governs our wonderful missionary work and is the foundation of the ecclesiastical operation of the Church. Even the Lord learned obedience and, in fact, was obedient to the ultimate degree. How many times did He worry about the “cup” and the consequence of His obedience to the demands that the Atonement would require of Him?

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

[Hebrews 5:8–9]

We have observed the result of the sacrifice of obedience in the lives of many. When a missionary is obedient, he or she is blessed with a greater ability to communicate with Heavenly

Father. Through obedience, the missionary, as with you and I, comes to know the Savior better. That knowledge allows more faithful, and thus more effective, prayer. Even obedience to the rules associated with your attendance at BYU is important. The greater reason, along with those mentioned by President Bateman at this podium last month, is that obedience is a great instructor. You come to know the Lord better as you follow rules set by Him and His servants.

I recall another time: I had finally graduated from the university and obtained my first real job with the IBM Corporation. The day had arrived when I could fulfill my longtime dream of purchasing a four-wheel-drive Suburban. My family enjoys a love affair with the great outdoors, and I looked forward to owning this wonderful vehicle. Even though it was not new, it was new to me. I was so proud of my new toy that I didn’t even park it in the garage. I parked it in the driveway so that all of my neighbors could see it. It was beautiful!

After only a few days, I answered my door to see guess who? The Scoutmaster. “Oh, Brother Brough, I see that you have a new four-wheel-drive vehicle. We are taking the Scouts on a weeklong outdoors trip, and I am wondering if I might borrow your Suburban.” My heart dropped as my mind quickly reviewed the danger this represented to my life’s dream. I carefully explained to him my concerns and suggested that he consider borrowing from someone else.

A day or two later, the bishop called on the phone. “Oh, Brother Brough, I see that you have this new four-wheel-drive vehicle. In a few days we are taking the Scouts on a week-long outdoors trip, and I am wondering if I can borrow your Suburban?”

I said, “Yes, you may.”

A couple of weeks after the Scouting event, the Scoutmaster came to my door. He said, “Brother Brough, I thought we were good

friends. Is there something wrong between us?"

I replied, "Of course not. Why would you ask?"

"Well," he said, "I asked to borrow your four-wheel-drive vehicle, and you refused to lend it to me. The bishop made the same request, and you let him take it. You know I'm a better driver than the bishop."

I responded with the answer I had been taught from my youth. I said, "I was no more comfortable with the bishop borrowing my four-wheel-drive vehicle than I was with your borrowing it. But he is the bishop, and if I understand the scriptures, he has the right to ask for anything I have."

Priesthood leaders must be careful because they have the right to place us under conditions where obedience becomes part of the law of sacrifice.

Sacrifice of Temple and Family History Service

On the night that the angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, he quoted from the book of Malachi, among others. In Malachi 3:3 we learn of a special offering from a group of people called the sons of Levi. This group of people would "offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." What was the offering (sacrifice) of which Malachi prophesied? The Prophet Joseph learned years later, in 1832, that it is the sacrifice of temple and family history service.

For the sons of Moses and also the sons of Aaron shall offer an acceptable offering and sacrifice in the house of the Lord, which house shall be built unto the Lord in this generation, upon the consecrated spot as I have appointed. [D&C 84:31]

Temple and family history work is designed to teach us about the Savior and even includes the possibility of being a type of savior

ourselves. The Lord was referring to the redemption of the dead when he revealed to the Prophet Joseph that we are "set to be a light unto the world, and to be the saviors of men" (D&C 103:9). Joseph Smith taught further:

But how are [we] to become saviors on Mount Zion? By building . . . temples, erecting . . . baptismal fonts, and going forth and receiving all the ordinances, baptisms, confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations and sealing powers upon [our] heads, in behalf of all [our] progenitors who are dead, and redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection and be exalted to thrones of glory with [us]. [Teachings, p. 330]

This act of being a savior upon Mount Zion is a major part of learning more of the important events that occurred in and near the two gardens. Doing for others what they cannot do for themselves, as much as anything, will help us come to know Christ.

Sacrifice of Missionary Service

The Lord also included missionary service as part of the righteous offering that would be given by the sons of Levi: "And also many whom I have called and sent forth to build up my church" (D&C 84:32).

Missionary work is and should be a sacrifice. Years ago I sold my computer service business and returned to the place of our childhood roots, a cattle ranch in a small town. My family and I moved to Robertson, Wyoming, where we began a new and very wonderful lifestyle. Our fourteen-year-old son, Joseph, owned a couple of black-and-tan hunting dogs. He loved his dogs and they loved him. After school each day he would do his chores, finish his homework, and then spend the rest of the evening with his faithful dogs.

One wintry day we received a life-changing telephone call from President Spencer W. Kimball. During that call, he extended the

invitation for me to serve as mission president and for my wife to serve as my companion.

I will never forget Joseph's reaction upon learning that we would be leaving the outdoor utopia we had created. "Dad, if we are going on a mission, what are we going to do with my dogs?" I replied that we would not be able to take them with us. A few weeks later, Joseph informed me that he had made arrangements to give his dogs away. I will never forget that day when a man came in a pickup truck to take Joseph's dogs. I watched a young fourteen-year-old boy's sacrifice and great faith as he loaded his dogs into that truck knowing he would never see them again.

I have always agreed that it is a great sacrifice for nineteen-year-old young men to leave their girlfriends. Likewise, it is a great sacrifice for sixty-five-year-old grandparents to leave their grandchildren. However, it can be an even greater sacrifice for a fourteen-year-old boy to leave his pet dogs.

Regarding the sacrifice required of those who serve missions, the Lord has said:

And any man that shall go and preach this gospel of the kingdom, and fail not to continue faithful in all things, shall not be weary in mind, neither darkened, neither in body, limb, nor joint; and a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground unnoticed. [D&C 84:80]

You may notice that I have great reason to appreciate the promise that not a hair of his head shall fall unnoticed. Those who still have all of their hair should be jealous because the promise does not include your hair. I can boast that my hair is not lost—it is translated and gone to another world!

As a result of the sacrifice of missionary work, we have many tens of thousands, including many of you, who have come to know the Lord in a wonderful, increased dimension. Through this increased knowledge, your faith

grows and your lives have much greater promise.

Sacrifice of Families

Regarding the sacrifice of even our families, we receive the following challenge from the Lord:

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. [Matthew 10:37–38]

Let me tell you of a recent experience that is part of the lives of General Authorities of the Church. As you may know, the Seventies serve in area presidencies and most live away from here in many nations of the earth. Each year the Quorums of the Seventy receive new or extended assignments for the coming year. Some of these assignments may mean that the General Authority and his wife will spend from three to five years away from their homes and families.

The First Presidency, because of their great love and concern for the Brethren and their wives and children, always have interviewed each Seventy personally before giving him an assignment. During this interview the members of the First Presidency inquire into the many issues that surround the Seventy and his family. These interviews have required great time and effort on the part of the First Presidency.

Recently all of the General Authorities and their wives were invited to a special meeting with the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. There President Thomas S. Monson explained that the First Presidency simply had not had the time to conduct their regular interviews. Then he informed all of us to prepare ourselves because he would announce, from the pulpit, our assignments for the coming year.

The suspense was great as President Monson announced the list of assignments, which would require great sacrifices by those leaving their homes and families. Personally, I have never witnessed a greater demonstration of willing sacrifice. I heard no complaints. I heard not a single negative comment. No one objected to either the method or the nature of the assignment. All of the Seventies and their wives simply returned from that meeting to begin the preparations that would take many from their homes and families for several years.

Of course, sadness is associated with our absence from our families. Many members of the Seventy have not been able to participate in important family events such as weddings, funerals, blessings, and graduations. They understand the sacrifice of families. Yet in the eternities they will not lose their families because they will receive the promises given to those who obey the law of sacrifice.

General Authorities are not alone in this demonstration of sacrifice. We remember the 500-600 letters that are sent each week to young people, temple missionaries, and family history missionaries asking them to sacrifice and leave their families.

More than 300 mission presidents and their families, plus 45 temple presidencies, accept their callings and assignments with the same spirit. These wonderful people accept their special calling as divine and as a manifestation of unique, personal revelation.

I love the revelation given personally to Brigham Young that is in section 126 of the Doctrine and Covenants:

Dear and well-beloved brother, Brigham Young, verily thus saith the Lord unto you: My servant Brigham, it is no more required at your hand to leave your family as in times past, for your offering is acceptable to me.

I have seen your labor and toil in journeyings for my name.

I therefore command you to send my word abroad, and take especial care of your family from this time, henceforth and forever. Amen. [D&C 126:1–3]

Sacrifice of Reputation

On occasion we can find ourselves in unique, and even awkward, social situations because of our Church membership and commitment. We then face the possibility of a sacrifice of our reputation or a sacrifice of some social comfort. Each of us probably will have the opportunity to be in a situation that will demonstrate our peculiarity. The Word of Wisdom, Sabbath-day observance, R-rated movies, and other elements may separate us from the mainstream.

Some years ago I became vice president of a large computer services company. The company had an annual executives' retreat with its top-level officers. At my first meeting, held in Sun Valley, Idaho, the company retained a famous professional entertainer, a so-called comedian, at significant expense to the company. We were transported by bus to a lovely restaurant some miles from the main resort. My assigned seat was at the head table with the chairman, president of the organization, and other senior executives. As the program began, I soon realized that the entertainer's idea of humor was vulgarity, profanity, and verbal pornography. I knew I could not remain and participate as a member of the audience that seemed to enjoy the entertainer's style. Yet I was concerned about leaving the head table in full view of the other executives and board members. I felt my leaving could represent a statement of disrespect for their effort to provide a relaxing evening of entertainment.

After a few more minutes of internal debate, I knew I could remain no longer as the entertainer continued his assault on values, people, and, particularly, women. As I got up and left the room, every eye seemed to be

looking at me. Everyone in the room knew of my Church affiliation, and all, I thought, seemed offended by my action. It was a long walk back in the dark to the resort village. My emotions alternated between being worried and angry. I was worried that I had offended the leadership of the company by my action. I was angry that they did not recognize the degrading garbage offered in the form of entertainment.

The next day I learned that some were contemptuous of my leaving and had felt offended that I rejected their choice of entertainment. To my disappointment, not one person gave any indication of having respected my action, and no one ever commented again about the evening. I must add, however, that the company never arranged for that type of offensive entertainment again for executive retreats.

Now as I look back on the event, I believe it contributed to my understanding of how Christ might have felt during the humiliation that was heaped upon Him. I received great comfort from the following scripture:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. [John 15:18–19]

And also,

For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. [Deuteronomy 14:2]

Sacrifice of Tribulation

Perhaps the greatest sacrifice we will make is the sacrifice of tribulation resulting from death, sickness, financial and business disasters, loss of a child, or even just the tribulation of old age. Major catastrophes such as

earthquakes, windstorms, fires, and wars are examples of tribulation that will be part of our lives. The Prophet Joseph taught: “If thou art called to pass through tribulation; . . . know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:5, 7).

None of us will escape tribulation. The prophets have not been free of a great measure of tribulation. In fact, a rigorous study of the lives of the prophets will reveal that tribulation is a common part of their lives. Our recent experience of watching President Howard W. Hunter’s great example of enduring tribulation will forever be a part of our memories, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

Sacrifice of Lives

Some may even sacrifice their lives. We have the example of Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s martyrdom; the terrible loss of members’ lives during the winter of 1846; and the subsequent loss of life during the early years of the great migration west. We are reminded of the deaths of Elders Ball and Wilson during their missions to Bolivia just a few years ago. The Lord has given a great promise to those who lose their lives as a consequence of their faith: “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:39).

Yet the greater sacrifice may not be that of giving our lives to death but that of living or giving the entirety of our lives to the service of the Lord. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1).

President David O. McKay made an important point when he suggested a modest one-word change in the words of the magnificent anthem “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

The original words were “As He died to make men holy, let us *die* to make men free.” The inspired change taught a significant lesson to us all: “As he died to make men holy, let us *live* to make men free.” (See *Hymns*, 1985, no. 60, and *Recreational Songs* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1949], p. 10.)

Conclusion

Can we possibly escape sacrifice? Joseph Smith, the seer, helped us understand this very significant requirement when he said:

All the saints of whom we have account, in all the revelations of God which are extant, obtained the knowledge which they had of their acceptance in his sight through the sacrifice which they offered unto him; . . . through faith, to . . . overcome the world, and obtain the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. [Lectures on Faith 6:11]

Now listen to the description of those who will inherit the celestial kingdom as revealed to the Prophet Joseph F. Smith prior to the 1918 October general conference.

And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality;

And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer’s name. [D&C 138: 12–13]

The law of sacrifice connects the profoundly important events of the two gardens: Eden and Gethsemane. This law provides a process that will allow us the greatest blessing of our lives. This process demonstrates our faith in the great plan of happiness. Added to the sacred and eternal ordinances and covenants of the gospel, it becomes our deepest expression of hope and faith in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through this process we may receive the gift of eternal life with those we love most in the celestial kingdom of our eternal God.

This is my faith and prayer, which I offer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.