

Joseph, Job, and Jesus

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Eating more fruits and vegetables. Flossing your teeth daily. Getting a colonoscopy at age 50. Most people would probably agree that these things are important. Yet, only 13% of Americans eat enough fruits and veggies;¹ only 40% of Americans floss daily—and let’s be honest, most of those people are lying to their dentists—;² and only 50% of American adults comply with colonoscopy guidelines.³ Perhaps most Americans just have poor health habits, but some things are much easier to discuss in theory than to experience in reality.

This applies just as much to the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it does to advice dispensed by the American Medical Association. Reading about sacrifice in Joseph Smith’s Lectures on Faith, Lecture 6, is tremendously informative. Actually *making* the sacrifices described is usually downright difficult. As a prisoner in Liberty Jail, Joseph pleaded with the Lord for relief: “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?”⁴

To clarify, this talk is not about the tribulations that are byproducts of living in a fallen world. Every person who lives “shall have tribulation.”⁵ The sun rises “on the evil and the good,” and the rain falls “on the just and on the unjust.”⁶ The situations I will discuss today, rather, refer to the opportunities to sacrifice that inevitably come when a person asks for life eternal, to truly know God and Jesus

Christ.⁷ These sacrifices are the result of your choice to offer your all to God in exchange for the knowledge that you are accepted of Him.⁸ Sometimes the Lord asks His children to offer common sacrifices. Other times, the sacrifices requested are individualized and personalized.

Just a few years before Liberty Jail, Joseph taught in Lecture 6 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; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things.”⁹ When you have been invited to make a sacrifice, it’s imperative to verify the source asking for the sacrifice. Joseph specifically used the word “religion.” The Lectures on Faith were published in 1835—a full 5 years after the LDS Church was organized. If Joseph had had the LDS Church in mind, he could have said “the LDS Church” or even “a Church” or “a religious institution” or “a religious leader,” but he didn’t. True religion is established by God, not by man or any Church organization.¹⁰ A person is accountable to God, and to God alone, for how he or she abides by the religion that God has established.¹¹ Thus, true saving religion—the kind that Joseph is talking about—does *not* need to be large and institutionalized, and it most definitely does not require teams of certified public accountants to ensure that it maintains a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. So make sure you’re sacrificing *to* God

as directed *by* God, and that you're not sacrificing to someone else or to something else. Moses said: "would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them."¹² It is between you and the Lord. No clerical supervision necessary.

In this Earth's history, the record of sacrifice goes back to Adam and Eve. From Lecture 6: "[i]t was in offering sacrifices that Abel, the first martyr, obtained knowledge that he was accepted of God."¹³ Every person needs to have this knowledge of acceptance, which comes from sacrifice. Covenants *also* come *by* sacrifice. From Lecture 6: "And in the last days, before the Lord comes, he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him *by* sacrifice."¹⁴ It is not a hypothetical sacrifice but an actual sacrifice that leads to the covenant. The sacrificing and the covenanting go together, like peanut butter & jelly; Captain Kirk & Mr. Spock, and politicians & lying.

The knowledge that comes *by* sacrifice also strengthens a person to withstand the slings and arrows of mortality. When you make an offering that God has asked you to make, God gives you the essential knowledge that your "course of life" is "according to [His will]."¹⁵ The assurance that you are on a path that is agreeable to God brings courage. It might not be easy, but the assurance that Christ approves of who you are and what you are doing enables you to "overcome the world, and obtain the crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God."¹⁶

Only this level of knowledge could explain how Joseph and his companions could endure more than four months in the inhumane and unsanitary conditions at Liberty Jail. Still, even though Joseph understood his favor with God, he understandably felt anguish over the tribulations of the Restoration. In the revelation found at Doctrine & Covenants Section 121, Joseph petitioned the Lord: “How long shall thy hand be stayed...? Yea, O Lord, how long shall [thy people and thy servants] suffer these wrongs and unlawful oppressions, before thine heart shall be softened toward them?”¹⁷ Joseph’s language was eloquent and inspired. Allow me to translate to modern language: “How much longer is this going to last?” “I have nothing left to give.” “Seriously??!! This just couldn’t get any worse.”

The Lord’s answer to Joseph shows God’s keen awareness of our circumstances, such that even a sparrow shall not fall on the ground without Him knowing about it.¹⁸ He said: “My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high”¹⁹ Fast forward to the end of Doctrine & Covenants Section 122, the Lord describes virtually every horrific thing imaginable that could befall Joseph, with the promise that “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.”²⁰ God will not ask you to do something unless it is for your greater good. Even if *you* cannot see the forest from the trees, He can.

The Lord also gives some perspective, because it's pretty much always true that as hard as things seem, things could still get worse. The Lord said to Joseph at Liberty Jail: "Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job."²¹ On the one hand, by comparison Joseph was currently in a better spot than Job had been. On the *other* hand, "not yet as Job" foreshadows that Joseph would be betrayed by his friends in the future, just like Job. This reference to Job is also the ultimate validation for the Book of Job, which many disregard as fiction. Here, the Lord affirms that Job's story matters, whether factual or allegorical.

So what did Job's friends do to him? Job was a faithful and prosperous man. He was the greatest of all of the men of the east. Job continually offered burnt offerings to God. Then, Job's fortunes took a rapid nosedive. First, the Lord agreed to allow Satan to "touch all that Job hath" with the condition that Satan could not harm Job's physical body.²² With this permission, Satan destroyed all of Job's property and killed all of Job's children.²³ Job remained steady and testified that "the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."²⁴ Next, the Lord authorized Satan to afflict Job's physical body, but not to the point of death.²⁵ With this permission, Satan smote Job's body with boils from head-to-toe.²⁶ Job grieved over his losses and physical afflictions, but he would not curse God or speak falsely against God.²⁷ Notice that, even though God

allowed Satan to hassle Job, God Himself remained in control. God established the parameters for Satan, knowing full well that Satan would push those parameters to the limit, but also knowing full well that Job could handle it. Another example that no matter how inadequate you may feel to the task, the Lord knows your capacity to endure sacrifice much more than you do.

Job stayed true to God and true to himself. Job's friends did not. Three of Job's friends came to mourn with him. They wrongly accused Job of sin and claimed that God caused Job to suffer as punishment for Job's crimes.²⁸ These are the false charges that the Lord referenced in Liberty Jail.²⁹

The story of Job ends on a high note. The Lord rebuked Job's friends, healed Job, doubled Job's previous wealth, and blessed Job with 10 more children. The story of Joseph ends much more like the story of Job began. On June 7, 1844 many of Joseph's former friends and dissenters from the Restoration published the *Nauvoo Expositor*. This newspaper claimed to expose Joseph's "vicious principles" and his practice of "abominations and whoredoms."³⁰ The details of these accusations are an entire talk in and of themselves, so for today it will suffice to say that the publication of the *Nauvoo Expositor* set off a chain of events that resulted in the martyrdom at Carthage Jail on June 27, 1844. Joseph first watched his brother, Hyrum—who was also his co-president and appointed successor in the LDS Church—die at the hands of an angry mob.³¹ I wonder what Joseph thought

as he watched his appointed successor die before him? Moments later, Joseph gave his own life to the gunfire.³²

Just as with Job and Joseph, your sacrifices will be personalized and tailored to you. When you earnestly seek “the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ,” you will *inescapably* face the opportunity to offer your character, your reputation, your good name, your possessions, your relationships, or even your own life. In exchange for your willful offering, you can receive the faith required to “enter into eternal rest” and to “be a partaker of the glory of God.”³³ You can become a joint heir with Jesus Christ.³⁴

The other day, I saw a man pushing a child in a stroller while he himself was riding on a motorized scooter. It reminded me of how human it is to seek out the path of least resistance. When it comes to sacrifice, however, there is no other way. Christ is the prototype of the saved man. From Lecture 7: We must “be precisely what he is and nothing else” to claim salvation.³⁵ “The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?”³⁶ “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; ... for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”³⁷ And *because* of Christ and Christ alone, salvation can be your destiny. He lives and will make “all [sacrifices] work together for good to them that love God.”³⁸

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- ¹ www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org
² www.ada.org
³ www.screenforcoloncancer.org
⁴ D&C 121:1
⁵ John 16:33
⁶ Matthew 5:47
⁷ John 17:3
⁸ LF 6:8
⁹ Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (“LF”) 6:8
¹⁰ D&C 134:4
¹¹ *Id.*
¹² Numbers 11:29
¹³ LF 6:9
¹⁴ LF 6:9, emphasis added
¹⁵ LF 6:1
¹⁶ LF 6:4
¹⁷ D&C 121:2-3, 4-5
¹⁸ Matthew 10:29
¹⁹ D&C 121:7-8
²⁰ D&C 122: 7,9
²¹ D&C 121:10
²² Job 1:6-12
²³ Job 1:13-19
²⁴ Job 1:21-22
²⁵ Job 2:1-6
²⁶ Job 2:7
²⁷ Job 2:10
²⁸ *See, e.g.*, Job 23
²⁹ D&C 121:10
³⁰ *Nauvoo Expositor*, June 7, 1844, p.1
³¹ *See* D&C 124:95; D&C 132:45; *Times & Seasons*, Oct 15, 1844, Vol 5, p.683
³² D&C 135:1
³³ LF 6:5
³⁴ *see* LF 6:12
³⁵ LF 7:9
³⁶ D&C 122:8
³⁷ *See* Isaiah 53:3-8
³⁸ Romans 8:28