

# The Law of Sacrifice

by James Blaine Chapman

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*The law of sacrifice is the principle that change requires sacrifice, and we must choose between the good of life and go always in the quest of the best.*

**Scripture:** Hebrews 11:24

**Topics:** "Sacrificial Living", "Faith And Obedience"

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## Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches about the inevitability of change and the sacrifices required to move from one phase of life to another. He emphasizes the need to let go of the past to embrace the future, drawing parallels between various life transitions and the concept of sacrifice. Chapman highlights the importance of choosing the higher plane over the lower plane, making decisions based on eternal values rather than temporary gains. He stresses the significance of sacrificing present pleasures for the sake of future rewards, echoing biblical examples of individuals who made sacrifices for their faith and calling.

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## Transcript

Change requires sacrifice, whether that change is for the better or for the worse. No one can both "eat his cake and still have it." If one presses forward to things which are ahead, he must "forget the things that are behind." We must leave the wilderness to get into Canaan, and there were some good things in the wilderness. The Tabernacle perished when the temple was built, and the tabernacle had some value. Rachel died when Benjamin was born, and life is sustained by death. The joys and pleasures of childhood will not abide the wisdom of age.

But we can not escape change--we can not stand still. Decay sets in where growth leaves off. Atrophy is the price of inactivity. Today is the tomorrow we desired, or feared yesterday. There is not an ounce of the body left that we had seven years ago. And spirit is as restless as flesh. "When I was a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." But there was a sacrifice in this putting away. No man's wife can make as good bread as his "mother used to make"; because the husband lacks the keenness of relish that the boy used to have. The freshness and wonder of the child has given away to the maturity and logic of the man. Youth sees visions, while age can only dream dreams. It is the gift of experience and conquest which enables one to dream dreams, but there is sacrifice in the loss of the ability to span the chasms and bridge the mighty deep by the visions of youth.

And a man can not do every thing. I remember the strange feeling that came over me when a stripling youth ran past me in the course. Once I held the distinction of being fast on foot, but when I became able

to carry a heavier load, I could not run so fast. But I had to sacrifice to get to where I could class as a lifter of heavy loads. My little son challenged me with the words, "I can do something that you can not do." I was not ready to give up until he offered to "crawl through a smaller crack in the fence."

Then there are limitations within the sphere of one's capabilities. I tried (just one year) to operate a farm as a side line to serving as the president of a college and preaching in the summer campmeetings. I still think I might operate a farm, but I am sure I can not do it without sacrificing some other tasks which I hope to accomplish. According to the law of physics a material body can not occupy two distinct positions at the same time, any more than two material bodies can occupy the same space at the same time. A man may have a vocation and an avocation, but he will not excel in two vocations at once. "The jack of all trades is usually good at none."

But a man can not do all that he would really love to do, so there is sacrifice in surrendering the privilege of doing many right and good things which he can not do because of the demands that are upon him.

A young man usually has a set goal that he feels he can afford to use every means for reaching; and he feels that he will be satisfied if he can only reach this goal. But as time goes on a man loses much of the distinctness of his ideal and flounders more or less amidst uncertainties. He wants "to eat his cake; and still have it." Just as he gets ready to eat his cake, the desire to still have it restrains him. Then when he was about decided to keep his cake, his desire to eat it unsettles him. So he flounders between the mistakes of the spendthrift and those of the miser. Most people lose the first good factor in success by failing to get started in time. I do not know where the adage "a poor beginning makes a good ending" originated but, anyway it is false. The man who starts in time has scored a good point.

Since sacrifice must be made, a man must decide the basis upon which he will make his choice of the things that he will sacrifice. Most values may be distinguished as

quality values or quantity values. That is, there are some things that are so much higher grade than others that a small bit of the former outweighs an unlimited amount of the latter. For instance money is a good thing, and any one would do a legitimate thing for pay. But suppose you should be offered a million dollars for your good name, would you sell? Would you tell a falsehood or commit a felony for the millions of Rockefeller? If you would you would have a false notion of values. A man's honor is beyond earthly values.

The quantity properly enters into some considerations. That is, a thing might be a good thing for today that will be a great detriment when a decade is considered. Alcohol speeds up the heart and makes one "more alive" for the instant; but in the end, the loss is irreparable. A man may rush out to his life's work without proper preparation and do much more the first year than he would be able to do if he spent time in preparation; but at the end of the decade, the prepared workman will be in the lead and by the end of a quarter of a century the prepared man will likely be the only one left in the race. Often I have seen young men quit going to school to accept a job out of consideration for the money that he would receive the first year! And I have seen young preachers rush out with a smattering of learning to accept the pastorate of a church, or to enter the evangelistic work on the plea that "time is too short" for him to spend any more of it in preparation. And I have seen that young man "come to himself" later to find out that he was lured by a glitter that was not produced by real yellow gold. A dollar today is not always worth the sacrifice that it requires when the earning power of a lifetime is compared with it. Souls were dying all the years of His minority, yet Jesus waited patiently until He was qualified for the task of preaching salvation to men; and

surely no one will question but that the three years, after He was really prepared, were really sufficient.

In the days of the Apostle Paul and the church at Corinth, martyrdom was so commonly the price of professing Christianity, that baptism, the sign of the Christian profession, came, also, to be considered the mark of death. There were not many hypocrites in those days; it cost too much to become even a professor of Christianity. But the Apostle reasoned on the resurrection, and concluded that the Christian profession and its very probable consequence, martyrdom, were justified on the ground of the promise and certainty of life beyond death. He said, in substance, that it was all right to sacrifice the present mortal life in the interest of the future immortal life. His theory was that one should sacrifice the lower plane of life for the higher. To "eat, drink, and be merry" is the philosophy of the man to whom today is all. Since the dead are to be resurrected, the matter of a few more or a few less days on this side of the resurrection is not a serious consideration.

Jesus also, said, "He that loseth his life shall save it, and he that preserveth his life shall lose it." That is, he that sacrifices his eternal interests upon the altar of time is giving eternal happiness for a day of pleasure; while he that sacrifices a present pleasure in the interest of the kingdom of God will find his pleasure in the land unmarred by sorrow and decay.

Most of our sacrifices are relative rather than absolute; seeming rather than real. We look now upon the baby girl weeping over her dolly's broken head and say, "Never mind, Little One, you will have real sorrow some day." We fret at the boy for becoming upset over the loss of a kite string, and warn him that losses that are much weightier are likely to befall him when he reaches the estate of manhood. But childhood sorrows and losses are as real as any others in this world; they are all just relative. Grown-ups swerve from duty to please their kin folks, waver because of the failure of the bank. draw back from the will of God because sordid worldlings misunderstand and malign them. But sometime we will look back upon these little losses and these light crosses and wonder that they ever were noticed at all.

After all, the principle of being "baptized for the dead" because of the hope of a better resurrection is applicable to all the stages and phases in life. We must sacrifice something, so let the sacrifice always be on the lower plane. A certain food is pleasant to my palate, but detrimental to my health; I will sacrifice the pleasure of my palate for the good of my health. A certain practice is an asset to my social standing, but is hurtful to my influence as a Christian; I will give the higher plane my preference. When the interests of body and mind conflict, I will vote for the intellect; when the intellect and the heart make counter demands, I will heed the clamors of my soul; when the laws of man and the laws of God are at variance, I will immediately make my choice to "obey God rather than man."

The saints of all the ages have been clear in this matter of choosing the plane upon which they will sacrifice. Joseph left his coat in Potiphar's house, along with pleasure and promotion, and fled to prison in order to preserve his virtue. Moses "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Abraham left his home in Ur of the Chaldees and lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob because he sought a city to come. The three Hebrew children did not ask for a second trial, but assured the king at once that they would not forsake the true God, whether He preserved them or let them perish. Job would not give up his integrity, even when every present proof of its profit had disappeared.

Physical suffering is better than spiritual condemnation. Sickness is preferable to sin. Social ostracism is a prize to be sought as compared with estrangement from God. Ignorance is less dark than moral evil. Political tyranny is but a dim type of soul oppression. Physical slavery is less bitter than the vassalage of Satan. Imprisonment in the dungeon of the persecutor is liberty as compared with enmeshment in the thralldom of the Devil. Death is glory when damnation is its alternative. In every case when the sacrifice lies between the members of any of these couplets, being "baptized for the dead," means choosing the latter member.

But everything is not "white or black" some things are gray. And choice between the best and the worst constitutes one of the smallest exercises of the volitional powers. We must come on up to a closer discrimination and choose between the good of life: we must go always in the quest of the best. Entirely within the scope of the Christian's sphere, Paul said, "I am in a strait betwixt two." A useful course in apostolic ministration was one alternative, home and rest in heaven were the other. The apostle started away back; he said, personally, I would prefer heaven, but further life would be more useful; so, I choose to abide. He followed his same principle of being "baptized for the dead" in that he buried the present pleasure for the sake of the future and permanent prize. It often occurs that there are two or more courses, each of which is legitimate, and, within itself right; but we can not run them all. In such a case we must elect to go the one which involves the highest motive; following this rule, we will never go wrong. If it is a matter of my own pleasure or my neighbor's profit, I must take the way of my neighbor's profit. If it is my own honor or God's glory, I must take the way of God's glory. If it is a choice between temporal gain and eternal riches, I must elect the way that leads to eternal riches. If the alternatives are temporal service or the saving of souls, I must prefer the higher service.

To our puerile minds, the best always seems to be the most difficult. We sometimes feel that we are called upon to take the way that is absolutely not best for us we imagine that our sacrifices are real. We think we are called upon to give up possessions without a cause and without just and equitable compensation. We attempt to believe that we are driven to do some things for no reason only just because they are difficult: or, which is just as bad, we fear that the good has been made difficult just to tempt us to leave it alone. We mourn over the loss of the things we sacrificed in order to gain the higher levels as though the loss of them were a real disaster. Even though we gain the gates of life, we still bewail the eye we plucked out and the hand and foot we cut off in order to pass the portal of the haven we desired. But no one will come into the better life without cutting off the members which held him to the old existence "Ye can not serve God and Mammon." No one will have part in the resurrection "out from among the dead" unless he has chosen to be baptized into the loss of all things that disqualify for it.

Entrance into higher planes of life require sacrifice of some things on the lower planes just as devotion to the lower demands relinquishment to one's claim on the higher. A youth must decide whether he will take immediate money-making, pleasure for pleasure's sake, leisure and a general good time or whether he will devote his attention to books, study and hard work in order that he may secure an education. In the former list, I do not intend to include dishonest money-getting nor sinful pleasure, the choice is within the scope of what is right, and is only a matter of taking the best. If he chooses the higher plane, he will likely pay the price in the currency of the lower sphere.

I do not know whether God has a first, and second, and even a third choice for His children or not. Sometimes it seems that He has. Moses might have been God's sole representative at the court of Pharaoh, but he pleaded his lack of eloquence, and had to divide the glory with Aaron. Joash might have smitten Syria until he had utterly consumed it, if he had been desperate enough. But he smote the ground

with the prophetic arrows but thrice and thus limited his victories to that number (2 Kings 13:18, 19). Though Moses was denied entrance into the promised land because of the outbreak of pride in the smiting of the rock, yet God did not altogether reject him. David found mercy with God, but his sins brought death to his child, plague upon Israel and rebellion against his throne. Apparently, one can be reduced to the ranks in the army of so the Lord without being given a dishonorable discharge. Of course, no one can be saved during rebellion against the will of God, and the rejection of "God's first choice" is frequently the rejection of everlasting life. Still, it is bad enough for one to be restricted to a second choice because of having rejected the first.

One of the saddest sights to me, is that of a man trying to gather up the tangled and broken threads of his life when it is all but too late. In youth he chose the lower plane and wasted his fortune of opportunity in riotous living. In maturity he entered school only to find that the brain cells which were so clear of obstructions in youth are now clogged and all but sealed. He struggles to gain the place which God offered him once, but he finds that he can not qualify-- youth is the time for education. I have seen the man who was called to preach the gospel, linger with the fisherman's nets, at the receipt of customs, in the counting house, or on the farm until he had only time enough left to attain to the rank and dignity of sergeant when he should have been a general. Called to the glorious work of the foreign missionary, many have accepted an easier berth, only to spend life, devoted though it may be, in the restlessness to which "might-have-beens" are always heir. We all would like the highest and best things, if we could have the others also. None of us would miss that better resurrection if it were not that it requires the surrender of the present ease and pleasure in order that it may be secured. It is the price that holds us back.

But the dead shall rise again. In the broader application, we say. every surrender on the lower plane is justifiable. David said, "A day in thy court is better than a thousand" outside. One day of the life that is just what it ought to be is worth a thousand days on the lower plane! A year equal to a Millennium! Oh how easy it is to get ahead when, like Mary, we have "chosen the better part." There is no man that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." To choose Christ means, in the practical things of life, to always choose the highest possible good. It means to deny yourself in fleshly appetites, earthly desires, and worldly ambitions. Yet, it means that Christ has reserved His choicest and best for the one who sets his hope all together upon Him. It means the actual discovery of the secret which the ancient alchemists sought of turning baser substances into gold; for it means to take the things which had no more than a paltry earthly value and turn them into units of wealth that will endure when the rust has destroyed the iron of Carnegie, and canker has eaten the gold of the Morgans, and the moth has consumed the purple of kings. How foolish of us not to exchange the fading beauty of a worldly career for the glory of the life that endureth forever! How foolish for us to be fascinated by the varied colors of a life that is no more enduring than that of the moth, when there is open to us an entrance into the indescribable splendors of the life that is free from death!

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