

What is our part in the Atonement?

Sources used for my talk in Sacrament Meeting
Minter Creek Ward – 29 March 2011

Satan wanted to take away our free agency. WHY? One reason is because he was too selfish to be willing to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins. He was not willing to go to the Garden of Gethsemane for us. He knew that if he took away our free agency then there would be no sin. If there was no sin there would be no need for the atonement and that would let him off the hook and free him from having to suffer for our sins. Another reason was that if we were all forced to be good and did not have to suffer any pain or temptation then we would never grow spiritually. We would never become. We would always be dependent on him for everything. He was not willing to let us become “JOINT HEIRS” with him in the kingdom of God. He wanted all the glory to himself.

We are perfected by our trials and suffering. We read words in the scriptures like POLISHED or REFINED that relate to being perfected. We become by doing, experiencing, overcoming. We too must have an “ATONEMENT” like experience in each of our lives to refine us and perfect us.

Elder Kent F. Richards April Conference 2011

“**Our great personal challenge in mortality is to become** “a saint through the atonement of Christ.” **The pain you and I experience may be where this process is most measured.**”

President Henry B. Eyring April Conference 2009

He set a course for each of us that can polish and perfect us to be with Him . . . The very **opportunity for us to face adversity and affliction** is part of the evidence of Their infinite love. God gave us the gift of living in mortality so that we could be prepared to receive the greatest of all the gifts of God, which is eternal life. Then our spirits will be changed. We will become able to want what God wants, to think as He thinks, and thus be prepared for the trust of an endless posterity to teach and to lead through tests to be raised up to qualify to live forever in eternal life.

It is clear that for us to have that gift and to be given that trust, we must be transformed through making righteous choices where that is hard to do. We are prepared for so great a trust by passing through trying and testing experiences in mortality. That education can come only as we are subject to trials while serving God and others for Him.

In this education we experience misery and happiness, sickness and health, the sadness from sin and the joy of forgiveness. That forgiveness can come only through the infinite Atonement of the Savior, which He worked out through pain we could not bear and which we can only faintly comprehend. . .

It will comfort us when we must wait in distress for the Savior’s promised relief that He knows, from experience, how to heal and help us.

The Lord always suits the relief to the person in need to best strengthen and purify him or her. . .

Elder Dallin H. Oaks November Conference 2006

“Healing blessings come in many ways, each suited to our individual needs, as known to Him who loves us best. Sometimes a ‘healing’ cures our illness or lifts our burden. But sometimes we are ‘healed’ by being given strength or understanding or patience to bear the burdens placed upon us.”

Job 23: 10

But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

D&C 121:1, 7-8

1 O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?

7 My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

8 And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high

D. Todd Christofferson April Conference 2011

As Many as I Love, I Rebuke and Chasten

Elder Christofferson Retold this story of President Hugh B. Brown that was published in the New Era

President Hugh B. Brown

New Era, Apr. 2001 & New Era, Jan. 1973, 14, 15

And then I heard a voice, and I recognized the tone of this voice. It was my own voice, and the voice said, ‘I am the gardener here. I know what I want you to do.’ The bitterness went out of my soul, and I fell on my knees by the cot to ask forgiveness for my ungratefulness. ... And now, almost 50 years later, I look up to [God] and say, ‘Thank you, Mr. Gardener, for cutting me down, for loving me enough to hurt me.’

Joseph Smith History of the Church 5:401

I am like a huge, rough stone rolling down from a high mountain; and the only polishing I get is when some corner gets rubbed off by coming in contact with something else. . . Thus I will become a smooth and polished shaft in the quiver of the Almighty. . .

Dallin H. Oaks Ensign, Nov. 2000, page 32

The Challenge to Become

The Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts—what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts—what we have become. It is not enough for anyone just to go through the motions. The commandments, ordinances, and covenants of the gospel are not a list of deposits required to be made in some heavenly account. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a plan that shows us how to become what our Heavenly Father desires us to become.”

God will wrench your very heart strings -- Joseph Smith

<http://emp.byui.edu/marrottr/GenAuthorities/WrenchHeartStrings.htm>

References to the Joseph Smith statement quoted by John Taylor about God wrenching our heart strings as a part of our proving here in mortality:

Neal A. Maxwell, *Wherefore Ye Must Press Forward*, p.51.

Since we are here to be proved, words of soberness like these from John Taylor are not surprising: "I heard the Prophet Joseph say in speaking to the Twelve on one occasion: 'You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God, and (he said) God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.'" (*Journal of Discourses*, 24:197.)

Harold B. Lee, *BYU Speeches*, February 7, 1962, p.9.

John Taylor, in connection with this, said, "I heard the Prophet Joseph Smith say to the Twelve, 'You will have all kinds of troubles and trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary for you to be tried, even as Abraham and other men of God.' And said he, 'God will feel after you and he will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings. And if you cannot stand it, you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God.'" (John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 24, p. 197.)

Church News, October 7, 1972, p.14.

President Taylor told the Twelve then, President [Harold B.] Lee declared: "You will have all kinds of trials to pass through, and it is quite as necessary that you be tried as was Abraham and other men of God. God will feel after you, and He will take hold of you and wrench your very heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the Celestial Kingdom of God."

John Taylor, *Journal of Discourses*, Vol.20, p.259 - p.260, March 2, 1879.

Did you ever know it is necessary that we should be tried in all things? If you do not you will find it out before you get through, and we are not through yet quite. In this connection, I am reminded of what I heard the Prophet Joseph say, speaking more particularly with reference to the Twelve, "The Lord will feel after your heart-strings, and will wrench them and twist them around, and you will have to learn to rely upon God and upon God alone."

A Discussion of Lecture 6 [of the *Lectures on Faith*]:

"Great Faith Obtained Only Through Personal Sacrifice," by Robert J. Matthews. "I heard Joseph Smith say and I presume Brother Snow heard him also-in preaching to the Twelve in Nauvoo, that the Lord would get hold of their heart strings and wrench them, and that they would have to be tried as Abraham was tried. And Joseph said that if God had known any other way whereby he could have touched Abraham's feelings more acutely and more keenly he would have done so. It was not only his parental feelings that were touched. There was something else besides. He had the promise that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that his seed should be multiplied as the stars of the heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore. He had looked forward through the vista of future ages and seen, by the spirit of revelation, myriads of his people rise up through whom God would convey intelligence, light and salvation to a world. But in being called upon to sacrifice his son it seemed as though all his prospects pertaining to posterity were come to naught. But he had faith in God, and he fulfilled

the thing that was required of him. Yet we cannot conceive of anything that could be more trying and more perplexing than the position in which he was placed (JD 24:264)."

We each have in a sense our own Garden of Gethsemane, our part in the atonement. That part comes in the trials and suffering, and challenges and temptations and pain we suffer in this life that are given to us as a gift from God to perfect us and polish us and help us to BECOME... Become like Him in all things. Satan did not want that. He wanted us to stay the same as we were and always be dependent on him for all things. He wanted all the glory unto himself. Christ was willing to take upon Himself our sins. He was willing to give us the opportunity to become like Him through our repentance and His gift of the Atonement and AFTER ALL THAT WE CAN DO... then He does the rest. We will be polished and proven by our trials, our Gethsemane of life, and in the end He will allow us to be JOINT HEIRS with him and have be given all that God has.

Romans 8:17

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**.

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Other related material:

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Rheo Burg gave a talk that same day about TAP ROOTS. That seems to fit into this subject so well. Her talk was based on the talk given by Sister Wixom, the general primary president from the 2011 Primary Auxiliary Training Meeting.

As I thought about that illustration it occurred to me that it fit into my talk too. The taproot of a plant, when it goes deep, even if the top is ripped off, it will still grow back. That is like our testimony and the top is like our life. Satan will cause us pain and suffering (tear away at the top), but as long as we have a deep tap root **THE TOP WILL ALWAYS GROW BACK NO MATTER HOW MUCH SATAN TEARS AWAY THE TOP PART OF OUR LIFE.**

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