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He Paid a Debt

*He paid a debt He did not owe,
I owed a debt I could not pay.
I needed someone to wash my sins away.
And now I sing a brand new song:
"Amazing Grace," all day long.
Christ Jesus paid the debt
That I could never pay.*

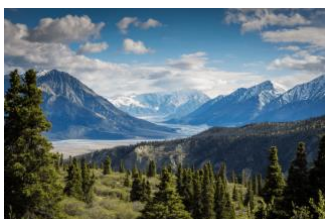
*He paid that debt at Calvary,
He cleansed my soul and set me free,
I'm glad that Jesus did all my sins erase;
I now can sing a brand new song;
"Amazing Grace," all day long,
Christ Jesus paid the debt
That I could never pay.*

*One day He's coming back for me
To live with Him eternally,
Won't it be glory to see Him on that day!
I then will sing a brand new song:
"Amazing Grace," all day long.
Christ Jesus paid the debt
That I could never pay.*

WORDS: American Folk Hymn

MUSIC: American Folk Melody, arr. Pam Stephenson (w. 1992)

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Fred Willmon

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THE HOPE OF HEAVEN - LOOKING FORWARD TO A BETTER LIFE

My parents were married in New Mexico during the Dust Bowl when gale force winds sent towers of sand and dust flying in the air. They had already experienced the Depression when money was almost non-existent. From the hardships they experienced, my mom learned to be frugal. She would always say, "Squeeze out every bit of toothpaste. Use every drop of shampoo. Make everything go as far as possible. Don't waste anything!"

My mother's first baby was stillborn, and she was told she would probably never have more children. However, she gave birth to seven more babies during the next 18 years. My oldest brother was born a year or so after the stillborn baby. She had only one dozen diapers, so she dried and reused the wet ones and washed the dirty ones on a rub board. They lived on a remote ranch at that time, and she had no running water—it had to be carried in from the well. Daddy carried some in before he left for work, but she probably did her share of carrying water as well.

My parents had very little in this earthly life. We had land, livestock, and equipment, but money was always tight. Laundry was a constant, time-consuming task. In the early years of my life, our laundry process began in a black kettle over a wood fire where the water was heated, then carried into the house.

Later on, Mother acquired a wringer washer and a couple of wash tubs. That was a real improvement in the way she did laundry. In contrast, my laundry "work" is nothing compared to what my mom had to do. For her, "Wash Day" was an all-day affair. We had a wringer washer and several tubs that sat on boxes or saw horses to be at a comfortable height for her. I'm not positive of the order of the tubs and the process. The clothes were generally washed in hot (or at least very warm) water.

Mother always used Breeze laundry powder because she got a “free” wash cloth in each box. When the clothes had washed the proper time, she would fish them out of the water with a wooden rod. Each item was carefully threaded through the wringer so that as little damage as possible would be done to buttons, zippers, etc. Some items bypassed the wringer and were gently wrung out by hand. They all went into the rinse tub and were dipped and sloshed to get the soap out. I think there was a second rinse tub to further remove the soap. White clothes, such as Daddy’s Sunday shirts or our white blouses and bobby sox, went through a bluing rinse. Bluing kept white things white. It was also what Mother used when we got stung by ants or wasps—which left us with blue dots on our arms and legs! The spots wore off after a few days.

Some of the laundered items were starched. Mother used a starch that she mixed up and warmed. Everything was hung on the clothesline to dry. There was nearly always a nice breeze blowing, and that helped keep clothes from being too stiff afterwards. Our clothes, all our bedding, dish towels, etc., were washed in some variation of the above process—except the special clothing that Mother washed by hand. She did “hand washing” almost every day. Most of the machine-washed items had to be ironed, but that was a process in itself and was on days other than washday.

Our family was large, so she cooked lots of food every day. She never knew a microwave. She cooked every meal from scratch, and she canned much of our food. She was well known for her made-from-scratch biscuits. We ate a steady diet of pinto beans, cornbread, and fried potatoes. Sunday dinners featured a roast, ham, or fried chicken. On Thanksgiving, if it could be afforded, we had ham or turkey.

Mother always wore dresses which she sewed for herself on her treadle sewing machine. She made many dresses for the four girls in the family. She made sure we had Sunday clothes made by her. She and my dad raised 7 children and babysat some of their grandchildren.

In my rearview mirror on life, I marvel at how hard she worked. My mother sacrificed a lot in her life and died at age 63. With all the sacrifices she made in her life, the hope of heaven was her bright light in life.

Life on this earth can be extremely difficult with health problems, poverty, fractured marriages, and more. God provides so much for us to look forward to and hope for. Old-time preachers described heaven so vividly and beautifully. Their word pictures made me want to go to

heaven—SOON! However, they also described the fires of hell equally eloquently. Those sermons terrified me!

In the Old Testament, God instituted a system of animal sacrifices for the people to offer for their sins. The Old Testament tells of the blood of bulls and goats being used constantly as burning sacrifices. The “aroma” of burning flesh filled the air with a constant reminder of sins.

God sent His son to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. *“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1 John 3:16).* Rather than the burning sacrifices in the Old Testament, our Savior went to the cross and shed His own blood to cleanse us from our burden of sin. Romans 15:4 says, *“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”*

Jesus came to take away the old covenant and seal the new covenant with His own blood. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, *“For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”* Hebrews 9:13-14. In Hebrews 10:4, the writer explains, *“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”* It took His holy, perfect, sinless blood to cover our sins.

What Jesus did on the cross for us brings us great hope, as Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, *“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* What a wonderful blessing of hope our Savior gave to us by being the perfect sacrifice for our sins!

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri

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OUR PRECIOUS FAITH

January 24, 1848 started out as a typical workday for carpenter James W. Marshall, who was tasked with constructing a water-powered sawmill in Coloma, California. While digging a channel, Marshall looked down and noticed shiny metallic flakes in the water below him.

Those metallic flakes were gold. This triggered what is known as the California Gold Rush. Having “gold fever,”

approximately 300,000 people flocked to California with the hopes of striking it rich.

Gold is still a precious commodity today. Gold is listed first among most valuable metals.

David, the Psalmist, had something to say about gold

In Psalm 19 he writes that “the Word of God is perfect, trustworthy, right, radiant, pure, enduring, and righteous. He follows this list with, “The Word of God is more precious than gold.” “Precious” is defined as (1) of great price or value and (2) costly. Most would consider gold valuable, but its value is material and temporal. The Word’s value is spiritual and eternal. Gold pales in comparison to the Word of God. Our faith stands on the Word of God. It is our guide through life.

Like David, the Apostle Peter also mentions gold. In 1 Peter 1:18-19, Peter reminds the believers in Asia Minor, “For you know that it was not with perishable things like silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.”

Our faith is not only valuable; it is also costly. It cost God his only son. Without Jesus shedding his blood and dying on the cross, we would have no forgiveness of sin, and no hope of eternal life. People flocked to California with the hope of getting rich. We who are Christians are already rich!

Our faith is precious! Let’s not take our faith for granted!

Sally Shank, Edmond, Oklahoma



Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2



WHAT DO I SACRIFICE?

What does sacrifice mean? We read throughout scripture about sacrifice – that our lives are to be sacrificial. Are sacrifice and service the same thing? We can and do serve in many ways. We pray for others, send cards, teach, preach, lead worship services (men), visit the sick and shut-ins. We prepare food for others and provide clothing for those in need.

We know Jesus sacrificed His life’s blood on a cruel cross to save us. He sacrificed heaven for earth. He gave up glory to become bound to earth by a human body to wipe away our sins so we could have a home in heaven. What a sacrifice! In Psalm 51:17, David says that the “sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” Genesis 22:2 begins with the Lord asking Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, “your only son, whom you love.”

We know God did not ask Abraham to do more than He was going to do for the whole world at a future time. He would sacrifice His Son, His only Son, whom He loved. “He presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in His blood.” Romans 3:25. Samuel tells Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22 that “to obey is better than sacrifice.” That tells us we must obey God’s commands or whatever we sacrifice will not please Him. Obedience must be part of our sacrifice. Saul got it wrong. He was told by the Lord through Samuel that when he conquered the Amalekites, he was to destroy every man, woman, child, and animal. But Saul spared King Agag and the best of the animals. His excuse was “I brought them back to sacrifice to the Lord.” It didn’t work. Saul lost his kingship because of his disobedience.

Later, King David decided to count all the inhabitants of Israel, especially men of military might. This was against God’s will because it meant that David was not depending on God for his victories. David sent Joab and his commanders to take the census. This brought about God’s wrath, so He sent His angel throughout the nation of Israel and slaughtered them. When David saw the angel of the Lord standing between heaven and earth with his sword stretched over Jerusalem, he knew he had committed a grievous sin. He went to Araunah to buy a portion of the threshing floor to build an altar to the Lord. Araunah offered the site to him for free, but David said, “No. I insist on paying full price. I will not take for the Lord what is yours, or sacrifice a burnt offering that costs me nothing.” 1 Chronicles 21:24.

This indicates that whatever I do in service and sacrifice, it must cost me something! Psalm 40:6 says, “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire.” I think this relates to Psalm 51:7 that what God requires first is a broken and contrite heart and obedience, then our sacrifice will be pleasing to Him.

Consider Paul’s great sacrifice to become a Christian. He gave up prestige, wealth, and a high position with the Pharisees. He was educated – a “Hebrew of Hebrews.” He kept the law zealously, even to persecuting Christians.

Then he had an encounter with Jesus that changed his life drastically forever.

He says in Philippians 3:7-9, "But, whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (NIV) Maybe we all need an encounter with Jesus! Of course, we have an "encounter" with Jesus every day through His word. As Christians, we should eagerly take advantage of that privilege.

We are a wealthy people in this country. We have "things" in abundance, and I'm not sure we would choose to give them up for the spiritual good of others. It's something to think about.

Mary Anna Melton, Rolla, Missouri



A Living Sacrifice

In Romans 12:1 Paul tells us, "Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." So, what does that mean? When we read of sacrifice in the Old Testament, and even of the sacrifice of Jesus, it involved death! What is this living sacrifice?

Sacrifice involves giving up something and/or surrendering something to another. Being a living sacrifice involves giving up our own desires to be what God wants and expects from us as servants of His. To do that effectively we must know exactly what it is He desires from us. In order to know, we must sacrifice time and effort to learn from His word. That involves individual study as well as being attentive to those who preach and teach His word. Talking to God in prayer takes time, thought, and concentration on what is important. These things become a "living" lifetime commitment.

Once we know what is expected, we must practice that servitude to God's plan and to others. It involves putting the needs of others above our own. Sometimes it takes a huge commitment of time and effort like sitting at the hospital with a brother or sister. At others it may be so simple as telling someone you love them, or putting a Band-Aid on a scraped knee. It may be missing a favorite TV program to drive someone to a different city to apply

for a job, or to attend a sick relative. It could be taking time and the cost of gasoline to drive miles out of your way to pick up someone to attend worship services every week. Being a living sacrifice involves making the choice to love others and God to the point of denying our own desires to benefit someone else. Large or small, all those acts of love are pleasing to God.

All this also requires a willing heart. Just going through the motions of worship without true involvement is hollow and vain. Begrudging our acts of kindness are of little benefit to God. They may help a brother or sister, but God knows our heart. He expects us to be that living sacrifice with joy. Make no mistake, our service does bring joy. We can be happy in a job well done, and we can rejoice knowing God is pleased.

Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice by giving His life in a most cruel fashion so that we might have an eternal home with God. Can we deny the expectation of living service as a means of thanks and praise to the God of heaven who allowed His only son to do that for us?

Wilburta Arrowood, Napoleonville, Louisiana



The Conduit

*In the temple now they are killing the lambs. There,
Two hundred and seventy thousand will die. The air
Of Jerusalem has been filled with their bleating
All day, as red-sleeved priests perform their duty of meting
Out death. One by one, white throats are slit.
The temple has the hot, moist smell of blood about it.
A conduit drains from the great brass altar down
To the brook Kidron.*

*But in the dusk-light of this Thursday, the leaves
Of the olive trees tremble as the wind heaves
And lunges into them. Men approach the blood-swollen
creek
And cross this bridge, hurrying toward the shade they seek.
Why has this lone Man stooped at the Kidron before He
crosses,
His finger just touching the red water, and He pauses.
Pauses?*

Latayne C. Scott

Via Songs of Faith and Praise, #370

