

The Disciple's Sacrifice

by John Henry Jowett

John Henry Jowett emphasizes the necessity of sacrificial living and suffering in the life of a disciple to fulfill the mission of Christ.

Scripture: Matthew 16:24, Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Philippians 1:29, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24, Hebrews 13:13, 1 Peter 2:21, 1 Peter 4:13, Revelation 12:11

Topics: "Suffering Of Christ", "Sacrificial Living"

Description

John Henry Jowett preaches on the concept of filling up what is behind in the sufferings of Christ, emphasizing that while Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary is complete and all-sufficient, believers are called to continue His sacrificial work by sharing in His sufferings through ministry, intercession, beneficence, and service. Jowett highlights the importance of having a sacrificial spirit, vividly conscious of personal redemption, to truly fill up what is lacking in Christ's sufferings. He challenges listeners to be in the sacrificial succession, shedding blood in various forms of sacrificial living, echoing the sacrificial examples of martyrs and missionaries who have gone before us.

Transcript

"I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." - Colossians 1:24

"I fill up that which is behind!" Not that the ministry of reconciliation is incomplete. Not that Gethsemane and Calvary have failed. Not that the debt of guilt is only partially paid, and there now a threatening remnant which demands the sacrifice of human blood. The ministry of atonement is perfected. There is no outstanding debt. "Jesus paid it all." In the one commanding sacrifice for human sin Calvary leaves nothing for you and me to do. In the bundle of the Savior's sufferings every needful pang was bore

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,

In my place condemned He stood,

Sealed my pardon with His blood,

I can add nothing to that. There nothing lacking. The sacrifice is all sufficient.

And yet "I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ." The sufferings need a herald. A story needs a teller. A gospel requires an evangelist. A finished case demands efficient presentation. The

monarch must repeat himself through his ambassadors. The atoning Savior must express Himself through the ministering Paul. The work of Calvary must proclaim itself in the sacrificial saints. In his own sphere, and in his own degree, Paul must be Christ repeated. As a minister in Greece and Asia Minor Paul must reincarnate the sacrificial spirit of Jerusalem and Galilee. He must "fill up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ." The suggestion is this - all ministry for the Master must be possessed by the sacrificial spirit of the Master. If Paul is to help in the redemption of Rome he must himself incarnate the death of Calvary. If he is to be a minister of life he must "die daily." "The blood is the life." Without the shedding of blood there is no regenerative toil. Every real lift implies a corresponding strain, "and wherever the crooked is made straight "virtue" must go of the erect. The spirit of Calvary is to be re-incarnated in Ephesus and Athens and Rome and London and Birmingham; the sacrificial succession is to be maintained through the ages, and we are to "fill up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ."

"I fill up that which is behind"! That is not the presumptuous boast of perilous pride; it is the quiet, awed aspiration of privileged fellowship with the Lord. Here is an Apostle, a man who thinks meanly enough of himself, counting himself and abortion, regarding himself as "the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle," and yet he dares to whisper his own name alongside his Master's, and humbly to associate his own pangs with the sufferings of redemptive love. "I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ." Is the association permissible? Are the sufferings of Christ and His Apostles complementary, and are they profoundly cooperative in the ministry of salvation? Dare we proclaim them together?

Here is an association. "In all their afflictions He was afflicted." "Who is weak and I am not weak; who is offended and I burn not?" Is the association alien and uncongenial, or is it altogether legitimate and fitting? "In all their afflictions He was afflicted" - the deep, poignant, passionate sympathy of the Savior; "Who is weak and I am not weak?" - the deep, poignant, passionate sympathy of the ambassador. The kinship in the succession is vital. the daily dying of the Apostle corroborates and drives home the one death of his Lord. The suffering sympathies in Rome perfected the exquisite sensitiveness in Galilee and Jerusalem. The bleeding heart of Rome perfected the ministry of the broken heart upon the Cross. Paul "filled up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ."

Here, then, is a principle. The gospel of a broken heart demands the ministry of bleeding hearts. If that succession be broken we lose our fellowship with the King. As soon as we cease to bleed we cease to bless. When our sympathy loses its pang we can no longer be the servants of the passion. We no longer "fill up the sufferings of Christ," and not to "fill up" is to paralyze, and to "make the cross of Christ of none effect." Now the Apostle was a man of the most vivid and realistic sympathy. "Who is weak and I am not weak?" His sympathy was a perpetuation of the Passion. I am amazed at its intensity and scope. What a broad, exquisite surface of perceptiveness he exposed to the needs and sorrows of the race! Wherever there was a pang it tore the strings of his sensitive heart. Now it is the painful fears and alarms of a runaway slave, and now the dumb, dark agonies of people far away. The Apostle felt as vividly as he thought, and he lived through all he saw. he was being continually aroused by the sighs and cries of his fellow-men. He heard a cry from Macedonia, and the pain on the distant shore was reflected in his own life. That is the only recorded voice, but he was hearing them every day, wandering, pain-filled, fear-filled voices, calling out of the night, voices from Corinth, from Athens, from Rome also, and from distant Spain! "Who is weak and I am not weak?" He was exhausted with other folk's exhaustion, and in the heavy burdensomeness he touched the mystery of Gethsemane, and had fellowship with the sufferings of His Lord.

My brethren, are in this succession? Does the cry of the world's need pierce the heart, and ring even through the fabric of our dreams? Do we "fill up" our Lord's sufferings with our own sufferings, or are we the unsympathetic ministers of a mighty Passion? I am amazed how easily I become callous. I am ashamed how small and insensitive is the surface which I present to the needs and sorrows of the world. I so easily become enwrapped in the soft wool of self-indulgency, and the cries from far and near cannot reach my easeful soul. "Why do you wish to return?" I asked a noble young missionary who had been invalidated home: "Why do you wish to return?" "Because I can't sleep for thinking of them!" But, my brethren, except I spend a day with my Lord, the trend of my life is quite another way. I cannot think about them because I am so inclined to sleep! A benumbment settles down upon my spirit, and the pangs of the world awake no corresponding sympathy. I can take my newspaper, which is oft times veritable cup-full of horrors, and I can peruse it at the breakfast table, and it does not add a single tang to my feast. I wonder if one who is so unmoved can ever be a servant of the suffering Lord!

Here in my newspaper is the long, small-typed casualty list from the seat of the war; or here is half a column of the crimes and misdemeanors of my city; or here is a couple of columns descriptive of the hot and frantic doings of the racecourse; or here is a small paragraph telling me about some massacres in china; or here are two little hidden lines saying that a man name James Chalmers has been murdered in New Guinea! And I can read it all while I take my breakfast, and the dark record does not haunt the day with the mingled wails of the orphaned and the damned. My brethren, I do now know how any Christian service is to be fruitful if the servant is not primarily baptized in the spirit of a suffering compassion. We can never heal the needs we do not feel. Tearless hearts can never be the heralds of the Passion. We must pity if we would redeem. We must bleed if we would be the ministers of the saving blood. We must perfect by our passion the Passion of the Lord, and by our own suffering sympathies we must "fill up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ." "Put on, therefore, as God's elect, a heart of compassion."

Here is another association. Can we find a vital kinship? "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." So far the Master. "I would have you know how greatly I agonies for you." So far the Apostle. The Savior prayed "with strong crying and tears" ; His Apostle "agonised" in intercession! Is the association legitimate? Did not the agony at Rome "fill up" the "strong cryings" at Jerusalem? does not the interceding Apostle enter into the fellowship of his Master's sufferings, and perfect that "which is behind"? The intercession in Rome is akin to the intercession of the Master, the disciple's prayer must be stricken with much crying and many tears. The ministers of Calvary must supplication in bloody sweat, and their intercession must often touch the point of agony. If we pray in cold blood we are no longer the ministers of the Cross. True intercession is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice, a perpetuation of Calvary, a "filling up" of the sufferings of Christ. St. Catherine told a friend that the anguish which she experienced, in the realization of the sufferings of Christ, was greatest at the moment when she was pleading for the salvation of others. "Promise me that Thou wilt save them!" she cried, and stretching forth her right hand to Jesus, she again implored in agony, "Promise me, dear Lord, that Thou wilt save them. O give me a token that thou wilt." Then her Lord seemed to clasp her outstretched hand in His, and to give her the promise, and she felt a piercing pain as though a nail had been driven through the palm. I think I know the meaning of the mystic experience. She had become so absolutely one with the interceding Savior that she entered into the fellowship of His crucifixion. Her prayers were red with sacrifice, and she felt the grasp of the pierced hand.

My brethren, this is the ministry which the Master owns, the agonized yearnings which perfect the sufferings of His own intercession. Are we in the succession? Do our prayers bleed? Have we felt the

painful fellowship of the pierced hand? I am so often ashamed of my prayers. They so frequently cost me nothing; they shed no blood. I am amazed at the grace and condescension of my Lord that He confers any fruitfulness upon my superficial pains. I think of David Brainard - I think of his magnificent ministry among the Indians, whole tribes being swayed by the evangel of the Savior's love. I wonder at the secret, and the secret stands revealed. Gethsemane had its pale reflection in Susquahannah, and the "strong-crying" Savior had a fellow laborer in His agonizing saint. Let me give you a few words from his journal, after one hundred and fifty years still wet with the hot tears of his supplications and prayers: "I think my should was never so drawn out in intercession for others as it has been this night; I hardly ever longed to live to God, and to be altogether devoted to Him; I wanted to wear out my life for Him." "I wrestled for the ingathering of souls, for multitudes of poor souls, personally, in many distant places. I was in such an agony, from sun half-an-hour high till near dark, that I was wet all over with sweat; but O, my dear Lord did sweat blood for such poor souls: I longed for more compassion." Mark the words, "I was in such an agony from sun half-an-hour high till near dark!" May we do what David Brainard would not do, may we reverently whisper the word side by side with another and a greater word, "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." I say, was not Susquahannah a faint echo of Gethsemane, and was not David Brainard filling up "that which was behind in the sufferings of Christ?" Brethren, all vital intercession makes a draught upon a man's vitality. Real supplication leaves us tired and spent. Why the Apostle Paul, when he wishes to express the poignancy of his yearning intercession for the souls of men, does not hesitate to lay hold of the pangs of labor to give it adequate interpretation. "Ye remember, brethren, our travail." "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again till Christ be formed in you." Again I say, it was only the echo of a stronger word, "He shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Are we in the succession? Is intercession with us a travail, or is it a play-time, a recreation, the least exacting of all things, an exercise in which there is neither labor nor blood? "The blood is the life." Bloodless intercession is dead. It is only the man whose prayer is a vital expenditure, a sacrifice, who holds fellowship with Calvary, and "fills up that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ."

Here is another association. Is it legitimate? "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" "Having stoned Paul" (at Lystra) "they drew him out of the city supposing he had been dead." And Paul "returned again to Lystra!" Back to the stones! Is that in the succession? Is not the Apostle the complement of his Master? Is he not doing in Lystra what his Master did in Judea? Is he not filling up "that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ"?

Back to the stones! "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee, and goest Thou thither again?" The Boxers of late sought to decimate thee, poor little flock, and goest thou thither again? The New Guineans have butchered thy Chalmers and thy Tompkins, and goest thou thither again? Mongolia has swallowed thy men and thy treasure, and its prejudice and its suspicions appear unmoved, and goest thou thither again? Thou has been tiring thyself for years, seeking to redeem this man and that man, and he treats thee with indifference and contempt, and goest thou thither again?

My brethren, are we familiar with the road that leads back to the stones? It was familiar to the Apostle Paul, and when he trod the heavy way he entered the fellowship of his Master's Pains, and knew that he "filled out that which was behind of the sufferings" of his Lord. To go again and face the stones is to perpetuate the spirit of the Man who "set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem," even though it meant derision, desertion, and the Cross. We never really know our Master until we kneel and toil among the driving stones.

Only as we experience the "fellowship of His sufferings can we know the power of His resurrection." There is a sentence in David Hill's biography = that rare, gentle, refined spirit, who moved like a fragrance in his little part of China - a sentence which has burnt itself into the marrow of my mind. Disorder had broken out, and one of the rioters seized a huge splinter of a smashed door and gave him a terrific blow on the wrist, almost breaking his arm. And how is it all referred to?

"There is a deep joy in actually suffering a physical violence for Christ's sake." That is all! It is a strange combination of words - suffering, violence, joy! And yet I remember the evangel of the Apostle, "If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him," and I cannot forget that the epistle which has much to say about tribulation and loss has most to say about rejoicing! "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth through Christ." "Out of the eater comes forth meat."

These men did not shrink from the labor when the stones began to fly. Rebuff was an invitation to return! The strength of opposition acted upon them like an inspiration. Have you ever noticed that magnificent turn which the Apostle gives to a certain passage in his second letter to the Corinthians? "I will tarry at Ephesus . . . for a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries!" "There are many adversaries . . . I will tarry"! The majestic opposition constitutes a reason to remain!

"There are many adversaries"; I will hold on! My brethren, that is the martyr's road, and he who treads that way lives the martyr's life, and even though he do not die the martyr's death he shall have the martyr's crown. Back to the stones! "It is the way the Master went," and to be found in that way is to perpetuate the sacrificial spirit, and to "fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ."

To be, therefore, in the sacrificial succession, our sympathy must be a passion, our intercession must be a groaning, our beneficence must be a sacrifice, and our service must be a martyrdom. In everything there must be the shedding of blood. How can we attain unto it? What is the secret of the sacrificial life? It is here. The men and women who willingly and joyfully share the fellowship of Christ's sufferings are vividly conscious of the unspeakable reality of their own personal redemption. They never forget the pit out of which they have been digged, and they never lose the remembrance of the grace that saved them. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me: ; therefore, "I glory in tribulation!" "by the grace of God I am what I am: ; therefore "I will very gladly spend and be spent!" The insertion of the "therefore" is not illegitimate: it is the implied conjunction which reveals the secret of the sacrificial life. When Henry Martin reached the shores of India he made this entry in his journal, "I desire to burn out for my God," and at the end of the far-off years the secret of his grand enthusiasm stood openly revealed. "Look at me," he said to those about him as he was dying - "Look at me, the vilest of sinners, but saved by Grace! Amazing that I can be saved!" It was that amazement, wondering all through his years, that made him such a fountain of sacrificial energy in the service of his Lord.

My brethren, are we in the succession? Are we shedding our blood? Are we filling up "that which is behind in the sufferings of Christ"? They are doing it among the heathen. It was done in Uganda, when that handful of lads, having been tortured, and their arms cut off, and while they were being slowly burned to death, raised a song of triumph, and praised their Savior in the fire, "singing till their shriveled tongues refused to form the sound." They are doing it in China, the little remnant of the decimated Churches gathering here and there upon the very spots of butchery and martyrdom, and renewing their covenant with the Lord. They are "filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ." They are doing it among the missionaries. James Hannington was doing it when he wrote this splendidly heroic word, when he was encountered by tremendous opposition; "I refuse to be disappointed; I will only praise!" James Chalmers

was doing it when after long years of hardship and difficulty, he proclaimed his unalterable choice: "Recall the twenty-one years, give me back all its experience, give me its shipwrecks, give me its standings in the face of death, give it me surrounded with savages with spears and clubs, give it me back again with spears flying about me, with the club knocking me to the ground - give it me back, and I will still be your missionary!" Are we in the succession?

A noble army, men and boys,

The matron and the maid,

Around the Saviour's throne rejoice,

In robes of light arrayed;

They climbed the steep ascent of Heaven

Through peril, toil and pain!

O God, to us may grace be given

To follow in their train.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-henry-jowett/the-disciples-sacrifice/>

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