Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit

To have a broken heart and contrite Spirit is part of the sacrifice the Saints make when they repent. It comes in consequence of a person recognizing and admitting their sins and imperfections. See 2 Nephi 2:7.

See the study on ‘Repentance’

To be contrite (crushed in spirit by sense of sin)-completely penitent-bruised

It is to feel regret or penitence for wrongdoing

Contrite: The dictionary states that to be contrite is to feel guilt and regret, to be repentant, penitent, have remorse, to be in sackcloth and ashes, conscience stricken.

D&C 20:37: “And again, by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism—All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church.”

Moroni 6:2: “Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and witnessed unto the church that they truly repented of all their sins.”

3 Nephi 9:19-20: “And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire.....”

3 Nephi 12:19: “And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.”

D&C 52:15-16: “Wherefore he that prayeth whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances. He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.”

D&C 55:3: “And on whomsoever you shall lay your hands, if they are contrite before me, you shall have power to give the Holy Spirit.”

D&C 56:17-18: “Wo unto you poor men, whose hearts are not broken, whose spirits are not contrite, and whose bellies are not satisfied, and whose hands are not stayed from laying hold upon other men’s goods, whose eyes are full of greediness, and who will not labor with your own hands! But blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken,
and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs.”

D&C 59:8 “Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness even that of a broken heart and a contrite Spirit.”

D&C 97:8-9: “Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me. For I, the Lord, will cause them to bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit.”

Psalm 51:17: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

Psalm 34:18: “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

Isaiah 57:15: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

2 Nephi 2:7: “Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.”

2 Nephi 4:32: “May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite! O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, that I may walk in the path of the low valley, that I may be strict in the plain road!”

Mormon 2:13-14: “But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God; but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die. Nevertheless they would struggle with the sword for their lives.”

President Ezra Taft Benson identified what constitutes a broken heart and a contrite spirit

“Godly sorrow … is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and our God. It is the sharp and keen awareness that our behavior caused the Savior, He who knew no sin, even the greatest of all, to endure agony and suffering. Our sins caused him to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having ‘a broken heart and a contrite spirit’ (“A Mighty Change of Heart” Ensign, Oct. 1989 4)

A “broken heart and a contrite spirit” means that we offer deep sorrow for our sins as we humble ourselves and repent of them. (Gospel Principles)
“Contrite”

By Joseph A. Cannon Mormon Times 14 August 2008

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit." (3 Nephi 9:20) In 2 Nephi 2:6-7, Jacob teaches that "Redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for He is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered."

Since an indispensable element of our salvation consists in our having a "broken heart and a contrite spirit," it is probably pretty important for us to understand the meaning of this phrase. What exactly does the word "contrite" mean?

The Hebrew word for contrite means to be crushed, or sometimes to be thoroughly crushed; to be dejected; broken; beaten to pieces, or broken into pieces; to be bruised; to be humbled.

The English word contrite comes from a root that means "to rub, turn; with some derivations referring to twisting, boring, drilling, and piercing; and others referring to the rubbing of cereal grain to remove the husks and thence to the process of threshing, either by the trampling of oxen or flailing with flails" (The American Dictionary of Indo-European Roots). This root also means "to be very worn out in spirit."

The Oxford English Dictionary defines contrite, in addition to bruised and crushed and worn by rubbing, as "crushed or broken in spirit by a sense of sin, and so brought to complete penitence."

The psalmist teaches, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). In the Talmud commentary on this verse we learn, "How great are those who subdue their spirits, for when the Temple stood, if a person gave a burnt-offering, he gained the merit of only that single burnt offering. But he who sacrifices his pride and subdues his spirit with genuine humility is considered as if he offered every form of sacrifice. Passion and pride separate man from his Maker; when these are removed by means of sincere repentance and genuine submission, man draws as near to God as humanly possible."

A wonderful example of broken hearts and contrite spirits comes from the people of King Benjamin who, after hearing the first part of King Benjamin's sermon, "viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth" (Mosiah 3:2). It was only in this thoroughly crushed and humbled state that they recognized that it was only through "the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified" (Mosiah 3:2).

Alma the Younger came to this same point where he wished that he "could be banished and become extinct both soul and body" (Alma 37:15). Only then could he cry out, "O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me" (Alma 36:18).

As we come to the sacrament table each Sunday and figuratively place on the altar our sacrifice of a genuinely broken heart and contrite spirit, we remember the words of the hymn, "bruised, broken, torn for us on Calvary's hill" (Hymn 181). We realize that "He marked the
path and led the way and every point defines” (Hymn 195). Thus in that sacramental covenant we commit that we will remember the body and the blood of the Savior's complete and eternal sacrifice.” By Joseph A. Cannon Mormon Times 14 August 2008

Elder Bruce D Porter “A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit” Conference Oct 2007

The poet Rudyard Kipling wrote the following words in 1897, an admonition to the British Empire against pride:

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.

When Kipling spoke of a contrite heart as an “ancient sacrifice,” perhaps he had in mind the words of King David in the 51st Psalm: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit a broken and a contrite heart” (v. 17). David’s words show that even in Old Testament times, the Lord’s people understood that their hearts must be given to God that burnt offerings alone were not enough.

The sacrifices mandated during the Mosaic dispensation pointed symbolically to the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah, who alone could reconcile sinful man with God. As Amulek taught,

“Behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; … the Son of God” (Alma 34:14). After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ declared to the people in the New World: “Your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of [them]. …“And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart … , him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 9:19–20).

What are a broken heart and a contrite spirit? And why are they considered a sacrifice?

As in all things, the Savior’s life offers us the perfect example: though Jesus of Nazareth was utterly without sin, He walked through life with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, as manifested by His submission to the will of the Father. “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). To His disciples He said, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). And when the time came to pay the ultimate sacrifice entailed in the Atonement, Christ shrank not to partake of the bitter cup but submitted completely to His Father’s will.

The Savior’s perfect submission to the Eternal Father is the very essence of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Christ’s example teaches us that a broken heart is an eternal attribute of godliness. When our hearts are broken, we are completely open to the Spirit of God and recognize our dependence on Him for all that we have and all that we are. The sacrifice so entailed is a sacrifice of pride in all its forms. Like malleable clay in the hands of a skilled potter, the brokenhearted can be molded and shaped in the hands of the Master.

A broken heart and a contrite spirit are also preconditions to repentance. Lehi taught:
“Wherefore, redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah … “Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered” (2 Nephi 2:6–7).

When we sin and desire forgiveness a broken heart and a contrite spirit mean to experience “godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance” (2 Corinthians 7:10). This comes when our desire to be cleansed from sin is so consuming that our hearts ache with sorrow and we yearn to feel at peace with our Father in Heaven. Those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit are willing to do anything and everything that God asks of them, without resistance or resentment. We cease doing things our way and learn to do them God’s way instead. In such a condition of submissiveness, the Atonement can take effect and true repentance can occur. The penitent will then experience the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, which will fill them with peace of conscience and the joy of reconciliation with God. In a wondrous union of divine attributes, the same God who teaches us to walk with a broken heart invites us to rejoice and to be of good cheer.

When we have received a forgiveness of sins, a broken heart serves as a divine shield against temptation. Nephi prayed, “May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite!” (2 Nephi 4:32). King Benjamin taught his people that if they would walk in the depths of humility, they might ever rejoice, “be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of … sins” (Mosiah 4:12). When we yield our hearts to the Lord, the attractions of the world simply lose their luster.

There is yet another dimension of a broken heart—namely, our deep gratitude for Christ’s suffering on our behalf. In Gethsemane, the Savior “descended below all things” (D&C 88:6) as He bore the burden of sin for every human being. At Golgotha, He “poured out his soul unto death” (Isaiah 53:12), and His great heart literally broke with an all-encompassing love for the children of God. When we remember the Savior and His suffering, our hearts too will break in gratitude for the Anointed One.

As we make the sacrifice to Him of all that we have and all that we are, the Lord will fill our hearts with peace. He will “bind up the brokenhearted” (Isaiah 61:1) and grace our lives with the love of God, “sweet above all that is sweet, … and pure above all that is pure” (Alma 32:42). Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.”