

Experiencing The Mighty Change

**“It takes a Zion people to make a Zion Society,
and we must prepare for that.**

**We don't need changed programs now
as much as we need changed people.”**

**Pres. Ezra Taft Benson April 5, 1986,
in “Cleansing The Inner Vessel”**

A partial list of synonyms for the “mighty change of heart”:

Baptism of Fire
Baptism of the Holy Ghost
Baptism of Spirit
Becoming as a Little Child
Becoming a Son or Daughter of God
Becoming Clean
Becoming Converted
Becoming Righteous
Born Again
Born of the Spirit

Coming Unto Christ
Entering into the Strait and Narrow Path
Gift of the Holy Ghost
Having Clean Hands and a Pure Heart
Mighty Change of Heart
Receiving the Holy Ghost
Regeneration
Remission of Sins
Sanctification
Spiritual Healing

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Experiencing the mighty change of heart, which is the same as the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, is such an essential fundamental of the gospel that the Prophet Joseph expressed its importance this way:

You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism. and is good for nothing without the other half--that is. the baptism of the Holy Ghost. TPJS, pg. 314.

The baptism of water. without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it. is of no use; they are necessarily and inseparably connected. TPJS, pg. 360.

This book examines many of the scriptures and prophetic teachings about the mighty change experience; explains the few simple laws pertaining to receiving it; explains the many effects of the change; decodes the scriptures by identifying many of the different scriptural synonyms; provides some historical and contemporary accounts of this sacred experience; and demonstrates precisely why the mighty change and the attendant remission of sins is required to perfect each Saint, attain the celestial kingdom, and redeem Zion.

"... except for the scriptures, this is the best book I have read since joining the Church 26 years ago!" *Robert Sandberg, Nine Mile Falls, WA*

"I have rarely seen people respond like this to a book. People will buy one and within a week or two they're back for five or ten more." *Mark Taylor, Trax Audio & Books, Salt Lake City, UT*

"I became acquainted with "Experiencing The Mighty Change" after a ruptured aneurysm nearly ended my mortal existence. Through the power of a priesthood blessing, my life was spared. There is nothing quite like being the recipient of such a miracle to make you aware of the fragility of life, and the importance of coming to Christ - NOW. This book came to me at that time when I both needed it and was ready for it's message. What a tremendous help it has been in teaching me how to prepare for the baptism by fire, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the very real possibility of making my calling and election sure in this life. I thank the authors with all my heart. I consider this book my second miracle." *Ruth Di Francesco, Salt Lake City, UT*

"I've found this book to be one of the most thought provoking books I have read. It made me take inventory of myself and do some very serious thinking as to my standing and position with the Lord." *Mel Fish, M.S., West Valley City, Utah*

An astonishing find in this modest little book. In fact, when you are ready for it, this just may be one of the most valuable books you will ever read.

Virtually every chapter contains remarkable insights. The best "How To" book on coming to Christ I have ever read. This is truly meat, not milk.

Unquestionably one of the ten most valuable books, other than the scriptures, that I have read since I joined the LDS Church in 1961. I wholeheartedly recommend it to every committed Christian.

Foothill Publishing

DEDICATION

To Glendon and Bobette Johnson whose
Christ-like example made this possible.

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PREFACE

The quote that we use on the cover from Pres. Benson identifies the work's two main themes of establishing Zion through each of us experiencing the mighty change. Originally the proposed title was "On Becoming A Zion People" but we changed it to "Experiencing The Mighty Change" when we learned of an already published book bearing the title "Becoming A Zion People." We thought it would be helpful to explain this because the scope of the book covers not only the mighty change but the larger subject of many aspects of establishing Zion and is the reason why we begin by addressing the key to establishing Zion.

This is a collection of essays written over a number of years, many in the 1970's. It is our desire that these thoughts and scriptures be weighed for their merit and the spirit that you may experience as you read them rather than for who any of us are. We each feel that we have enjoyed the companionship of the Spirit as we have labored on our portions. We hope your experience as you read confirms that.

The mighty change is quite real! For those who wonder just what the mighty change is we recommend you turn first to the Appendix and read there a couple of personal accounts of this mighty change.

We have ventured to offer our thoughts on this subject because we have encountered a great many who do not understand either the reality or importance of this change and many who appear to resist believing it. In our cases we each required substantial effort and a number of years of searching the scriptures to identify and pull together from the four standard works key scriptural verses and develop at least some understanding of their meaning. It is our hope that by sharing the results of our collective efforts your learning time may be shortened and that many more will come to understand, seek for, and experience this mighty change.

The scriptures and statements from several modern Prophets are extensively quoted throughout and are the foundation as well as the entire framework for the thoughts we offer for your consideration. It is our hope that even though the material quoted may be familiar to you, nonetheless you will carefully read and ponder it for additional insights and evaluate whether it supports the point being discussed. Furthermore, more often than not the quotes contain significantly more meat than is highlighted or commented on.

Hal Wilcox, previously identified as Author I, wrote all of the chapters in Part II. Randy Klimt, previously identified as Author II, wrote all of the chapters in Parts I, III and V. Part IV was written principally by a third man and Hal Wilcox, with some minor contributions by Randy Klimt. All contributing authors are active, temple attending, committed Latter Day Saints. None of us has any fame or "name" or is known outside our own immediate circle of friends and acquaintances. We are all quite ordinary members of the church, all High Priests, have served in a variety of church callings the "highest" of which is Bishop, and all love the Lord and have searched the scriptures and pondered over them for many years. We have backgrounds in various educational, business and professional fields. Most of us have experienced the mighty change.

We are certainly not infallible. To the extent that we may be off the mark on some minor points we draw comfort from the views the Prophet Joseph expressed in April 1843, speaking of some differences over parts of the Book of Revelations.

I have seldom spoken from the revelations; but as my subject is a constant source of speculation amongst the elders, causing a division of sentiment and opinion in relation to it, I now do it in order that division and differences of opinion may be done away with, and not that correct knowledge on the subject is so much needed at the present time.

It is not very essential for the elders to have knowledge in relation to the meaning of beasts, and heads and horns, and other figures made use of in the revelations; still, it may be necessary, to prevent contention and division and do away with suspense. If we get puffed up by thinking that we have much knowledge, we are apt to get a contentious spirit, and correct knowledge is necessary to cast out that spirit.

The evil of being puffed up with correct (though useless) knowledge is not so great as the evil of contention. Knowledge does away with darkness, suspense and doubt; for these cannot exist where knowledge is.

There is no pain so awful as that of suspense. This is the punishment of the wicked; their doubt, anxiety and suspense causes weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth.

In knowledge there is power. God has more power than all other beings, because he has greater knowledge; and hence he knows how to subject all other beings to Him. He has power over all.

I will endeavor to instruct you in relation to the meaning of the beasts and figures spoken of. I should not have called up the subject had it not been for this circumstance. [Now comes the reason for our including this material.] Elder Pelatiah Brown, one of the wisest old heads we have among us, and whom I now see before me, has been preaching concerning the beast which was full of eyes before and behind; and for this he was hauled up for trial before the High Council.

I did not like the old man being called for erring in doctrine. It looks too much like the Methodists, and not like the Latter-day Saints. Methodists have creeds which a man must believe or be asked out of their church. I WANT THE LIBERTY OF THINKING AND BELIEVING AS I PLEASE. IT FEELS GOOD NOT TO BE TRAMMELED. IT DOES NOT PROVE THAT A MAN IS NOT A GOOD MAN BECAUSE HE ERRS IN DOCTRINE.

The High Council undertook to censure and correct Elder Brown, because of his teachings in relation to the beasts. Whether they actually corrected him or not, I am a little doubtful, but don't care. Father Brown came to me to know what he should do about it. History of the Church, Vol. 5, p. 340.

We have labored for years to find an effective way to powerfully present the incredible importance of being “born of the Spirit” in the “mighty change of heart” or the “baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.” We think that the following teachings of the Prophet Joseph do this far better than anything we could say. We pray Joseph's teachings will sufficiently impress you of the importance of this message.

To any non-LDS (non-Mormon) readers we again would ask you to suspend your disbelief of Joseph Smith, the Book of Mormon, etc. and read on letting the Spirit guide you. We say again that what Joseph Smith taught simply explains the full significance of the Savior's teaching to Nicodemus in John 3:5.

The following little known teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith should be of intense interest to every Christian and especially to every Latter Day Saint.

The DISAPPOINTMENT of hopes and expectations at the resurrection would be INDESCRIBABLY DREADFUL. Joseph Smith as quoted in TPJS at top of pg. 325 & Documentary History of the Church, Vol 6, pp. 50-52.

Referring to the preceding statement of the Prophet, Elder Marion G. Romney once said:

We might take a lesson from an account given by the Prophet of a vision of the resurrection in which he records that one of the saddest things he had ever witnessed was the sorrow of the members of the Church who came forth to a resurrection below that they had taken for granted they would receive. Improvement Era, #52, Dec. 1949, p. 754.

The following teachings of the Prophet Joseph explain **why** so many would fall short of the Celestial Kingdom.

You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half-that is the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Savior says, **"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."** "Though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." according to Galatians 1:8. Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith (hereafter "TPJS"), Joseph Fielding Smith at pg. 314.

I will leave this subject here, and make a few remarks on the subject of baptism. **The baptism of water, without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it, IS OF NO USE; they are necessarily and inseparably connected. An individual MUST be born of water AND the Spirit in order to get into the kingdom of God.** TPJS at pg. 360.

Every man lives for himself. Adam was made to open the way of the world, and for dressing the garden. Noah was born to save seed of everything, when the earth was washed of its wickedness by the flood; and the Son of God came into the world to redeem it from the fall. **But except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** This eternal truth settles the question of all men's religion. A man may be saved, after the judgment, in the terrestrial kingdom, or in the telestial kingdom, but **he can NEVER see the celestial kingdom of God, without being born of water and the Spirit.** He may receive a glory like unto the moon, [i.e. of which the light of the moon is typical], or a star, [i.e. of which the light of the stars is typical], but he can NEVER come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, **unless he becomes as a little child and is taught by the Spirit of God.** TPJS at pg. 12

We're now going to add two additional scriptures on the subject of the "Church of the Firstborn".

D&C 107:18-19 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church --
19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

D&C 77:11 Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel - twelve thousand out of every tribe?
A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN.

The following statement from the Prophet perhaps explains why the preceding teachings of Joseph are so little known.

But there has been great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn dodger [stick of corn bread] for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle [hammer]. Even the Saints are slow to understand.

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen. Teachings of The Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 331.

We recall a story about Pres. Joseph Fielding Smith who some years ago created quite a stink when he said during a talk at BYU that only about 10% of the Saints would make it into the Celestial Kingdom. There was such an uproar that he went (or was sent) back to BYU to calm things down. During this meeting he purportedly said in effect, "I've discussed this matter

with Pres. McKay (then the Pres.) and he agreed that the actual number is about FIVE percent rather than ten percent." Using the above standards given by the Prophet Joseph, what do you think the percentage would be today?

For those interested in learning more about "being born of the Spirit" we encourage you to READ ON. Should you encounter in any one chapter material that you consider to be incomplete or troubling, remember that the first (but not the only) rule of understanding is to read on. Our efforts to break the material into various topics is arbitrary because the gospel is a seamless web and cutting it into pieces is for convenience only. Furthermore, different people organize ideas differently. In addition, many scriptures have multiple aspects and are often quoted in different chapters or subsections as those different aspects are explored. The book contains 27 chapters plus the Appendix. That is quite a bit of material.

What we are really getting at here is that you may well not see the complete picture that we are attempting to lay out until you have read it all, perhaps more than once. So, read on - and enjoy!

We hope our efforts may be at least some help to those who earnestly seek to come fully unto Christ.

Hal Wilcox & Randy Klimt
March, 1998

PART I

An introduction that gives an overview of the change required to become a Zion people; the many scriptural terms used to refer to the change; the many ways that the change is vital to spiritual growth; and the need to get about doing it - NOW.

CHAPTER 1

THE KEY TO ESTABLISHING A ZION SOCIETY

On April 5, 1986 President Ezra Taft Benson made many striking statements of a number of powerful principles in "Cleansing the Inner Vessel", during his first conference as President of the church. Two of those statements that form the central theme of this work are highlighted at the conclusion of the following excerpts from that address. Today, In February, 1999, as we revise this chapter, we see these statements as far more significant than when they were first given in 1986 or in 1992 when we originally wrote this chapter.

As I have sought direction from the Lord, I have had reaffirmed in my mind and heart the declaration of the Lord to "say nothing but repentance unto this generation." (D&C 6:9, 11:9) This has been a theme of every latter day prophet, along with their testimony that Jesus is the Christ and that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.

...
*Watchmen--what of the night? WE MUST RESPOND BY SAYING THAT ALL IS **NOT** WELL IN ZION. As Moroni counseled, we must cleanse the inner vessel (see Alma 60:23), beginning first with ourselves, then with our families, and finally with the Church.*

*A prophet of God stated, "Ye shall clear away the bad according as the good shall grow ... until the good shall overcome the bad." (Jacob 5:66) **IT TAKES A ZION PEOPLE TO MAKE A ZION SOCIETY, AND WE MUST PREPARE FOR THAT.***

*... **WE DON'T NEED CHANGED PROGRAMS NOW AS MUCH AS WE NEED A CHANGED PEOPLE.** Ensign, May '86, p. 4.*

THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORK IS TO EXPLORE WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT EXACTLY WHAT THIS CHANGE IS AND WHAT THOSE WHO DESIRE THIS CHANGE MUST DO TO EXPERIENCE THAT CHANGE AND THEREAFTER REMAIN CHANGED ONCE THE CHANGE OCCURS.

In this chapter we will focus on those few scriptures that reveal that this change is the foundation to establishing a Zion society. The balance of this work will discuss (1) many aspects of this change and (2) that the process of true repentance is something more than what is commonly understood. True and complete repentance culminates in a clearly discernible experience or event of change that fills one with the pure love of Christ thus eliminating the basis for the attitudes from which flow the entire range of non-loving, selfish, prideful, and other divisive behaviors that from the beginning of the restoration to now have prevented establishing a Zion society.

However, before commencing this discussion we think it would be helpful to briefly explain two things.

First, that the scriptures refer to this change in many different, well known words and phrases that include the following: "converted", "born again", "born of God", "born of the spirit", "baptism of spirit", "baptism of fire", "mighty change of heart", "sanctified", "having clean hands and a pure heart", "remission of sins", "becoming a son (or daughter) of God", "hope", and even "come unto Christ." The scriptures supporting this summary statement will be quoted throughout this work. As you read these many quotations, notice, among other things, the many different words and phrases used to describe this change and its effects.

Second, once one understands what the change is, its effects, and that it is referred to in so many different ways throughout the scriptures, the scriptures open up in marvelous ways and one can begin to see and comprehend a wide array of new depths and truths including the two central themes of this work, namely:

(1) the central importance of the change to one's personal spiritual growth and development, including eligibility for the Celestial Kingdom, and

(2) that Zion cannot be established and maintained until people individually and collectively experience this change and then remain changed.

Now back to the objective of this chapter which is to show that this change was THE KEY to the establishment of the two previous Zion societies.

The restoration scriptures provide in Moses 6 & 7 and 4 Nephi the most complete accounts of the only two Zion societies that we know of. For many years after we joined the church in 1961 we considered these to be at best bare bones accounts and for years wished that we had much fuller accounts with a more complete explanation of how to reestablish Zion. **But, as our eyes have opened we were amazed to see that what we thought to be insubstantial, bare bones accounts are instead astonishingly meaty and, in fact, clearly contain all the fundamentals necessary to know about establishing and maintaining a Zion society.** We begin with the account of Enoch's original Zion. In Moses 6 we find a rich, precious record of the teachings of both father Adam and Enoch. Moses 7 recounts the establishment of Zion and then we find in verse 27 an incredible pearl in a clear statement of the key that made Zion possible. In order that we might put this pearl in its proper setting we quote some of the preceding verses:

21 And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he beheld, and lo, Zion, in the process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever

....

23 And after that Zion was taken up into heaven, Enoch beheld, and, lo, all the nations of the earth were before him;

24 And there came generation upon generation; and Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of man; and behold, the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth.

25 And he saw angels descending out of heaven; and he heard a loud voice saying: Wo, wo be unto the inhabitants of the earth.

26 And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced.

27 And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.

The incredible pearl is the bold portion in which it is clear that the one single thing that qualified individuals to live in Enoch's Zion was the change brought about by the Holy Ghost falling upon them. This is also the only scripture that we know of that so clearly establishes this point.

Was this news to Adam and Enoch? Of course not! Let us now examine the precious record of their teachings that the Lord has seen fit to give us as found in Moses 6. In our view the record of Enoch's reply to the question of Mahijah from Moses 6:41 through Moses 7:1 ranks among the greatest verses in the scriptures. Following are a few relevant excerpts beginning with verse 51 in which Enoch is quoting from the record and teachings of father Adam, who was then still alive and living somewhere among them:

51 And he called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh.

*52 And he also said unto him: If thou will TURN UNTO ME and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and REPENT of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, **ye shall***

receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in His name and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you.

...

58 Therefore I give unto you (Adam) a commandment to teach these things freely unto your children saying:

59 That by reason of transgression com eth the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so become of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the spirit, and be cleansed by blood even the blood of mine Only Begotten that might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;

60 For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified:

...

64 And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord, and he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water.

65 And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man.

66 And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: thou art baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever;

67 And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days and end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.

68 Behold, thou art one in me, a son of God; and thus may all become my sons. Amen.

Let us now go to the record of the only other Zion society known to us as found in Fourth Nephi. We found it interesting that in accord with the law of witnesses that in the mouths of two or three witnesses all things shall be established, we have records (or witnesses) of two such societies. We find it remarkable that in the entirety of 4th Nephi there are only two verses, 1 & 12, that tell of the things that they did that enabled them to enjoy the blessings of such a society. (We wonder if there are only two because the Lord wants to make sure that we will be sure to see and comprehend the worth of these verses.) The rest of 4th Nephi tells of the blessings they enjoyed and what happened that caused them to lose these greatest of earthly blessings. Let us now consider these two verses:

*I And it came to pass that the thirty and fourth year passed away, and also the thirty and fifth, and behold the disciples of Jesus had formed a church of Christ in all the lands round about. **And as many as did come unto them and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost.***

...

12 And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft to and to hear the word of the Lord.

Until we understood more fully what it meant to receive the Holy Ghost we did not appreciate the significance of the verses we have quoted here about the importance of this change in establishing Zion societies. **Finally we understood that maintaining the change wrought by the Holy Ghost is precisely what enabled both the people of the Enoch's Zion and in Fourth Nephi to establish and maintain their Zion societies.** Now, having gained some measure of understanding of the effects of this mighty change, we could more fully appreciate the overwhelming importance of President Benson's message about the need to become a changed people in order to establish Zion.

The rest of this work is devoted to considering a number of aspects of exactly how one goes about doing just that, including the vital role of fasting and prayer. We will also consider in some detail the effects and consequences of this marvelous, God given gift or endowment that

at the present time for most does not come easily or spontaneously and does not yet appear to be well understood or enjoyed by more than a very small percentage of the Saints. This work is a modest effort to help change that.

As our own eyes opened and we became aware of the necessity of becoming changed, we began to ponder why are so very many living without this life-changing blessing that the Lord clearly wants us each to receive? **We learned that part of the answer is that one of the key principles of spiritual learning and growth is "ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find."** WITHOUT KNOWING THAT SUCH A BLESSING IS AVAILABLE AND A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF JUST WHAT IT IS, WHY IT IS IMPORTANT, AND WHAT ONE MUST DO TO RECEIVE IT, HOW CAN ONE ASK AND SEEK FOR IT? This work is a modest effort to increase understanding and thereby encourage the seeking and obtaining of this vital divine blessing.

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES ON THE REALITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHANGE

For those who either know nothing about or seriously question whether this change, also known as the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, is correct doctrine or important to the Lord, we offer the following scriptures and some excerpts from "Mormon Doctrine" as an introduction to the wealth of scriptures discussed throughout that instruct us about this absolutely essential "mighty change, which is brought about through repentance.

We say again that the process of repentance culminates, as a general rule, in a clearly discernible experience or event of change known by many different well known words or phrases including the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.

Now we'd like to introduce a series of scriptures about repentance and the baptism of fire, given very early in the restoration even before the formal organization of the Church. The first scriptures in this series are from D&C 5, given in March, 1829, almost a year before the Book of Mormon was first published early in 1830.

8 Oh, this unbelieving and stiffnecked generation - mine anger is kindled against them,

*9 Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for **a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto FUTURE generations;***

10 But this generation shall have my word through you;

...

15 And the testimony of three witnesses will I send forth of my word.

*16 And behold, WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH ON MY WORDS, THEM WILL I VISIT WITH THE MANIFESTATION OF MY SPIRIT; AND **THEY SHALL BE BORN OF ME, EVEN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT -***

"SAY NOTHING BUT REPENTANCE" FINALLY CLEARLY EXPLAINED

In April 1829 in D&C 6:9 the Lord first gave the commandment to "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation." The next month, May, He repeated this same commandment in the same words in D&C 11:9. In June, 1829 the Lord again gave the same message in three separate revelations and in slightly different words. First, he told David Whitmer to "declare repentance unto this generation." D&C 14:8. Then in D&C 15:6 John Whitmer is directed that "the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people,..." Finally, in D&C 18:10-15 He instructed Joseph, Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer that,

10 Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;

11 For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, THAT ALL MEN MIGHT REPENT AND COME UNTO HIM.

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12 And he hath risen again from the dead, THAT HE MIGHT BRING ALL MEN UNTO HIM, ON CONDITIONS OF REPENTANCE.

13 And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!

14 **WHEREFORE, YOU ARE CALLED TO CRY REPENTANCE UNTO THIS PEOPLE.**

15 And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, AND BRING, SAVE IT BE ONE SOUL UNTO ME__, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

16 And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have BROUGHT UNTO ME into the kingdom of my Father, how great will be your joy if you should bring MANY SOULS UNTO ME.

17 Behold, YOU HAVE MY GOSPEL BEFORE YOU, AND MY ROCK, AND MY SALVATION.

18 Ask the Father in my name, in faith believing that you shall receive, AND **YOU SHALL HAVE THE HOLY GHOST**, WHICH MANIFESTETH ALL THINGS WHICH ARE EXPEDIENT UNTO THE CHILDREN OF MEN

The Lord in verses 15-16 above emphasizes that THE PURPOSE OF REPENTANCE IS TO BRING SOULS UNTO HIM. **NO OTHER DESTINATION OR STOPPING PLACE, such as church membership, IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE LORD! THE LORD COMMANDS EACH OF US TO HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.** And in verse 18 He again describes the benefits of coming unto Him as receiving the Holy Ghost "which manifesteth all things."

Then nine months later, in March 1830, Joseph receives D&C 19, which we have now come to understand as perhaps **the single** most significant revelation on repentance in all scripture. This section is usually quoted to show the consequences of not repenting; however, TO US IT IS FAR MORE VALUABLE BECAUSE OF THE LORD'S CLEAR EXPLANATION OF WHAT TRUE REPENTANCE IS. In the first four verses, the Lord gives several reasons why we should listen to what He has to say, concluding with this reminder that He retains,

"all power, even to the destroying of Satan and his works at the end of the world, and the last great day of judgment, which I shall pass upon the inhabitants thereof, judging every man according to his works and the deeds which he hath done. Vs 3

Then, beginning in verse 4 He presents the fundamental theme of man's eternal choice to either "repent or suffer:"

4 And **SURELY EVERY MAN MUST REPENT OR SUFFER**, for I, God, am endless.

In verses 5 through 18 He explains for the first time exactly how severe such suffering will be for all those who will not repent and come unto Him.

Beginning with verse 13 He three times directly commands Martin Harris, and indirectly each one of us, to repent, again emphasizing the repent or suffer theme thus:

13 **WHEREFORE, I COMMAND YOU TO REPENT**, and keep the commandments which you have received by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., in my name;

...

15 **THEREFORE, I COMMAND YOU TO REPENT** -- repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore -- how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

...

20 **WHEREFORE, I COMMAND YOU AGAIN TO REPENT**, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you CONFESS YOUR SINS, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit.

The command to "confess your sins" in verse 20 is a fundamental element of true repentance, as we shall clearly show in later chapters.

Next the Lord again commands:

21 AND I COMMAND YOU THAT YOU PREACH NAUGHT BUT REPENTANCE

Finally, the Lord explains exactly what He means when He commands us to "preach repentance" in the following clear and powerful verse:

31 And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but THOU **SHALT DECLARE REPENTANCE AND FAITH ON THE SAVIOR, AND REMISSION OF SINS BY BAPTISM AND BY FIRE YEA EVEN THE HOLY GHOST.**

I'm going to pause for a moment to explain just how significant the above scripture is. This is new information that you won't likely find anywhere else. Since I joined the LDS church in 1961 as a senior in college, I have read extensively and also heard a lot of talks from the President of the LDS church, his counselors, apostles, other General Authorities, Stake Presidents, Bishops, and others on repentance:

NO ONE has ever quoted the above verse 31.

NO ONE has ever explained that the Lord was NOT in verse 31 contradicting the commandment He had just given in verse 21 to "preach naught but repentance."

NO ONE has ever explained that the Lord in verse 31 is simply giving a more specific explanation of what "teaching repentance" means.

I have NEVER heard or READ ANY talk or any article by ANYONE specifically and clearly on the importance of the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.

At the end of this chapter I'll offer a few thoughts on why this doctrine is so little known and understood.

The next two verses emphasize just how profoundly important and just how serious the Lord is about the COMMANDMENT He has just given.

32 Behold, THIS IS A GREAT AND **THE LAST COMMANDMENT which I shall give unto you concerning this matter; for this shall suffice for thy daily walk even unto the end of thy life.**

33 And **misery thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these Counsels, yea, even the destruction of thyself and property.**

The remaining verses of this remarkable revelation on repentance contain some very specific directions to Martin Harris and then conclude with these strong words of hope and encouragement from our divine Coach:

39 Behold, canst thou read this without rejoicing and lifting up thy heart for gladness?

40 Or canst thou run about longer as a blind guide? (He has just explained great truths to Martin, including what repentance is, so Martin no longer has to walk in the darkness of not understanding.)

41 Or canst thou be humble and meek, (one result of true repentance) and conduct thyself wisely before me? (by obeying the commandments and counsel given. Then this final statement which sums up the entire objective and consequence of true repentance) **YEA, COME UNTO ME THY SAVIOR. AMEN.**

THE "FULNESS OF THE GOSPEL" AS DEFINED BY THE LORD

Now, shifting our focus to what the Savior describes as "his Gospel" and the "fulness of my gospel", we find in D&C 39:5-6 given on January 5, 1831 the shortest scripture we know of in which He defines His Gospel. Incidentally, this is another scripture that I've NEVER heard quoted in church or anywhere else.

D&C 39:5-6 *And verily, verily, I say unto you, HE THAT RECEIVETH MY GOSPEL RECEIVETH ME; AND HE THAT RECEIVETH NOT MY GOSPEL RECEIVETH NOT ME.*

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6 And **THIS IS MY GOSPEL** - repentance and baptism by water, and **THEN COMETH THE BAPTISM OF FIRE AND THE HOLY GHOST**, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.

There are three important points we'd like to make about the message of these verses. The first one is obviously the significance of the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost as a vital component of the gospel. The second is not quite as obvious, but equally important. It is the Lord's own statement that **until one receives each and every one of the elements He has just identified, including the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, one has NOT received Christ.**

The third point, which is clearly implied in the first two points, is that **those who reject His Gospel or any part of His Gospel actually reject Jesus Christ. The reason this is true is that ONE'S REMISSION OF SINS COMES ONLY IN AND THROUGH THE BAPTISM OF FIRE. In other words, it is through the baptism of fire that Christ's Atonement becomes fully effective in one's life. So, what Jesus is telling us in these two verses is that those who reject His Gospel are actually rejecting His Atonement, which is the same thing as personally rejecting Jesus Christ.** We're explaining this now to impress upon you that the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is the heart, the soul, and the center core of the Gospel so that you'll continue to read on. The abundance of scriptures evidencing the correctness of this explanation will be discussed in chapter 2 and other chapters throughout this work.

The rest of Section 39 is quite profound and bears reading and pondering in light of the new understanding presented here. For instance, in verses 11 and 18 the Lord refers to the gospel as He has just defined it in verse 6 as the "FULNESS of my gospel". How many classes have you sat in while the class speculated about what exactly constituted the "FULNESS" of the gospel and the teacher made of list on the chalkboard of these speculations? Well, that question is forever answered by these few verses. By simply following a few references in the footnotes on the phrase "fulness of the gospel", one can also quickly see that the gospel definition as the Savior gives it in D&C 39:6 is also referred to as the "everlasting covenant." D&C 66:2; 133:57 By using this same technique you can also identify yet more names for it in the scriptures, such as the "new and everlasting covenant." Heb. 7:8-13

EXCERPTS FROM "MORMON DOCTRINE" BY BRUCE R. McCONKIE

We'll conclude this introduction to the baptism of fire with two excerpts from the 2nd edition of Bruce R. McConkie's "Mormon Doctrine":

BAPTISM OF FIRE

See Baptism, Born Again, Gift of the Holy Ghost, Holy Ghost, Sanctification, Sanctifier. To gain salvation every accountable person must receive two baptisms. They are baptism of water and of spirit. (John 3:3-5) The baptism of the Spirit is called the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost. (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; 2 Ne. 31:13-14; 3 Ne. 11:35, 12-2; Morm. 7:10; D&C 20:41; 33:11; 39:6) By the power of the Holy Ghost, who is the sanctifier (3 Ne. 27:19-21), dross, iniquity, carnality, sensuality, and every evil thing is burned out of the repentant soul as if by fire; the cleansed person becomes literally a new creature of the Holy Ghost. (Mos. 27:24-26) He is born again.

The baptism of fire is not something in addition to the receipt of the Holy Ghost; rather, it is the actual enjoyment of the gift which is offered by the laying on of hands at the time of baptism. "Remission of sins," the Lord says, comes "by baptism and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost." (D&C 19:31; 2 Ne. 31:17.) Those who receive the baptism are "filled as if with fire." (Hela. 5:45) Mormon Doctrine p. 73

BORN AGAIN

See Baptism, Baptism of Fire, Birth, Conversion, Gifts of The Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit of Promise, Sons of God, Spiritual Death, Spiritual Life. To gain salvation in the celestial kingdom

men must be born again (Alma 7:14); born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:1-13); born of God, so that they are changed from their "carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness," becoming new creatures of the Holy Ghost. (Mosiah 27:24-29.) They must become newborn babes in Christ (1 Pet. 2:2); they must be "spiritually begotten" of God, be born of Christ, thus becoming his sons and daughters. (Mosiah 5:7.)

The first birth takes place when spirits pass from their preexistent first estate into mortality; the second birth or birth "into the kingdom of heaven" takes place when mortal men are born again and become alive to the things of the Spirit and of righteousness. The elements of water, blood, and Spirit are present in both births. (Moses 6:59-60.) The second birth begins when men are baptized in water by a legal administrator; it is completed when they actually receive the companionship of the Holy Ghost, becoming new creatures by the cleansing power of that member of the Godhead.

Mere compliance with the formality of the ordinance of baptism does not mean that a person has been born again. No one can be born again without baptism, but the immersion in water and the laying on of hands to confer the Holy Ghost do not of themselves guarantee that a person has been or will be born again. The new birth takes place only for those who actually enjoy the gift or companionship of the Holy Ghost, only for those who are fully converted, who have given themselves without restraint to the Lord. Thus Alma addressed himself to his "brethren of the church" and pointedly asked them if they had "spiritually been born of God," received the Lord's image in their countenances, and had the "mighty change" in their hearts which always attends the birth of the spirit. (see Alma 5:14-31)

Those members of the Church who have actually been born again are in a blessed and favored state. They have attained their position, not merely by joining the Church, but through faith (1 John 5:1), righteousness (1 John 2:29), love (1 John 4:7), and overcoming the world, (1 John 5:4). "Whosoever is born of God doth not continue in sin; for the Spirit of God remaineth in him; and he cannot continue to sin, because he is born of God, having received that holy Spirit of promise." (Inspired Version, 1 John 3:9.) Mormon Doctrine, p. 101-102.

The need for this change, while not well understood or widely taught, is not a complete secret. Indeed, President Benson has on occasion spoken of this change. Two prominent instances were his 1985 October Conference address (his last as President of the Quorum of the Twelve) entitled "Born of God", Ensign, Nov. '85 pp. 5-7 and the First Presidency Message in the October 1989 Ensign entitled "A Mighty Change of Heart", at pp. 3-5. Indeed, Pres. Benson closes his extraordinarily powerful last talk "Beware of Pride" with an admonition to "cleanse the inner vessel" and be born of the Spirit. In our view, President Benson in his three years of conference addresses as Prophet clearly and powerfully taught the steps leading to this change, especially in the following addresses:

- 4 April '86, "The Power of the Word", Ensign, May 1986, pp. 79-82
- 5 April '86, "Cleansing the Inner Vessel", Ensign, May 1986 pp. 4-7
- 6 April '86, "A Sacred Responsibility", Ensign, May 1986, pp. 77-78
- 4 Oct. '86, "The Book of Mormon-Keystone of Our Religion", Ensign, Nov. 1986 pp. 4-7
- 4 Oct. '86, "Godly Characteristics of the Master", Ensign, Nov '86 pp. 4-7
- 5 Oct. '86, "The Gift of Modern Revelation", Ensign, Nov. '86, pp. 78-80
- 4 April '87, "The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants", Ensign, May '87 pp. 83-85
- 5 April '87, "The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants", Ensign, May '87 pp. 83-85
- 4 Oct. '87, "Come Unto Christ", Ensign, Nov. '87, pp. 83-85.
- 2 April '88, "The Great Commandment-Love The Lord", Ensign, May '88 pp. 4-6
- 3 April '88, "Come Unto Christ, and be Perfected in Him", Ensign, May '88 pp. 84-85
- 1 Oct. '88, "Flooding the Earth with the Book of Mormon", Ensign, Nov. '88 pp. 4-6
- 2 Oct. '88, "I Testify", Ensign, Nov. '88 pp. 86-87
- 1 April '89, "Beware of Pride", Ensign, May '89 pp. 4-7

In our view, there is great benefit to be gained from reading, studying and pondering every one of these extraordinary and singularly powerful messages as well as his other messages to fathers, mothers, youth, children, singles, and the elderly. We have all gotten the Prophet's message to read the Book of Mormon, but the Lord has given us so much more in

these marvelous messages of His Prophet that seems to have been largely overlooked and is so vitally important, especially considering the time and season. **We sometimes wonder if the Lord is not profoundly exasperated by our lack of attention.**

THE MAIN THEME OF THIS WORK IS TO SHOW THAT THE MIGHTY CHANGE BRINGS ONE TO CHRIST. THIS IS ALSO THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF MORMON.

In our view, THE PRIMARY REASON that the Lord through President Benson exhorted us so frequently and forcefully to read the Book of Mormon is so that many more will finally see and understand that **BECOMING CHANGED IS THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.** We show this by quoting many of the passages from the Book of Mormon, Doctrine & Covenants and Pearl of Great Price which plainly express the overwhelming importance of becoming changed.

WE PRAY THAT THIS MESSAGE WILL TOUCH YOUR HEART AS IT HAS PROFOUNDLY TOUCHED OURS.

THE ADVERSARY HATES THE BAPTISM OF FIRE DOCTRINE

As you continue to read you are probably going to wrestle with the question of why you have not previously heard much about the central importance of the change known as the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost? Earlier we mentioned that we'd offer some thoughts as to why this is so. **We have concluded that of all of the many aspects of the restoration which the adversary has so vigorously and virulently fought against, the single truth which he most wants to destroy is the doctrine of the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.**

We say this because there are only a few remnants of the doctrine left in the New Testament. The few remnants include John the Baptists's statement that while he, John, baptized with water, the Messiah would baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost; the account in the third chapter of the gospel of John of the Savior's night discussion with Nicodemus during which Christ said "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"; the events on the day of Pentecost; the encounter with Simon the sorcerer; and assorted other references to being "filled with the Spirit" or the "Holy Ghost."

That the doctrine was apparently still in the scriptures which the Jews had at the time of Christ is indicated by the Lord's rebuke to Nicodemus in John 3 that as Master in Israel he should have known of the baptism of the Spirit. That plus the restored account of Adam's baptism by water and then fire and the Holy Ghost in Moses chapter 6 clearly show that this doctrine was removed from the Hebrew (Old Testament) scriptures.

The current problem with these various tidbits of information remaining in the Bible is that there is not enough to gain a correct understanding of what is really happening, although it is obvious that something observable and discernible did happen when people actually received the baptism of fire. There is also virtually no way anyone can recognize the multitude of different words and phrases, like "converted", "sanctified", and so on, used throughout all the scriptures to refer to the same experience. Because of this absence of information about what the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost really is and what are true, bonafide manifestations of the Holy Spirit, the adversary has for centuries enjoyed the ability to deceive and delude many with a wide variety of false manifestations including jumping, shoutings, rolling about - hence the name "holy roller", meaningless utterances of gibberish or "glossolalia", and so on.

And we say that the adversary hates this doctrine the most, because even with a profound abundance of information in the three modern scriptures restored through the Prophet

Joseph Smith, the collective capacity to comprehend these vital verses has been severely diminished by a variety of methods. **The end result is the current situation of this doctrine and experience being essentially “hidden” or “lost” to those who have in their hands the wealth of vital, restored information about it.**

And, finally, we say this because of our understanding that by destroying understanding of this doctrine the adversary prevents many from seeking for and receiving their own complete remission of sins in the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, which, thus, **profoundly diminishes the effectiveness of the Savior’s Atonement.**

WE VENTURE TO TELL YOU OF THESE THINGS AT THE BEGINNING IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUSPEND ANY DISBELIEF YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT THE CENTRAL IMPORTANCE OF THE BAPTISM OF FIRE DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE AND TO CONTINUE TO READ ON WHILE PRAYERFULLY SEEKING THE CONFIRMATION OF THE SPIRIT ON THE TRUTHFULNESS OF THE THINGS TAUGHT.

If you would like to read some modern accounts of some who have received their baptism of fire and remission of sins, there are several such accounts in the APPENDIX.

CHAPTER 2

Is The Change Really an Event -- And Just How Important Is It, Really?

We have said that the PROCESS of repentance culminates in a discernible, divinely bestowed experience or event of change. It is certainly fair to ask, "Is it really an identifiable event? "Is there no other way?", and "Just how important is this change, really?" The focus of this chapter is to look somewhat into the scriptures, the Prophet Joseph's and President Benson's statements on these questions. We emphasize that this is only an overview, not a complete discussion of every relevant scripture.

IS IT REALLY AN IDENTIFIABLE EVENT

We start by considering two verses from Alma upon which the title of this work is based. Note the repeated use of the word "experienced."

*Alma 5:14 And now, behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances. **Have ye EXPERIENCED this mighty change in your hearts?***

*Alma 5:26 And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, **if ye have EXPERIENCED a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?***

Next we turn to the accounts of Adam found in our modern restored scriptures. There we learn that the baptism of the spirit existed from the days of Adam. Recall Moses 6:64-65 describing the baptism of Adam quoted in Chapter 1. Indeed, most of the detailed descriptions of people experiencing the baptism of the spirit found in the Book of Mormon occurred before the time of the Savior. Consider for example the events described in Mosiah 4:1-3, which occurred about 124 B.C.:

*1 And now, it came to pass that when King Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.
2 And they had viewed them selves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice saying: O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.*

*3 And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words **the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come,** according to the words which King Benjamin had spoken unto them.*

The Prophet Joseph gave us the following description of the effects of the Holy Ghost as found on pages 149 to 150 of The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith:

There are two Comforters spoken of. One is the Holy Ghost, the same as given on the day of Pentecost, and that all Saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism. This first Comforter or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, though it may not have half as much visible effect upon the body; for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the

effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to pur ge out the old blood and m ake him actually of the seed of Abraham . That m an that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) m ust have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first m ight be far before the Gentile in pure intelligence.

Do these scriptural accounts and the descriptions by the Prophet Joseph appear to you to be describing an imperceptible process or a discernible event?

Next, let us consider what we think is the single most instructive incident in all of the scriptures on the baptism of the spirit in 3 Nephi Chapter 19. The events described there occurred on the morning of the second day of the Savior's appearance to the Nephites. That morning the twelve whom the Savior had selected the preceding day were baptized (presumably this was a rebaptism) and then received a baptism of the spirit, but only after special prayers and a single minded intense desire to receive the Holy Ghost. This is an especially interesting point today in as much as prior to this time Nephi, and presumably the other 11, had been valiant and faithful church members and leaders, even working mighty miracles, including raising the dead. [See 3 Nephi 7:19 & 19:4 where Nephi raised his brother Timothy from the dead after Timothy had been **stoned to death!** Not only was this a raising from the dead, but it obviously had to include a dramatic restoration of Timothy's badly damaged body.] We begin at verse 5:

5 And behold, the m ultitude was so great that they did cause that they should be separated into twelve bodies.

6 And the twelve did teach the m ultitude; and behol d, they did cause that the m ultitude should kneel down upon the face of the earth, and should pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus.

7 And the disciples did pray unto the Father also in the name of Jesus. And it cam e to pass that they arose and ministered unto the people.

8 And when they had m inistered those same words which Jesus had spoken nothing varying from the words which Jesus had spoken—behold, they knelt again and prayed to the Father in the name of Jesus.

*9 And **they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.***

10 And when they had thus prayed they went down unto the water' s edge, and the m ultitude followed them.

11 And it came to pass that Nephi went down into the water and was baptized.

12 And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized all those whom Jesus had chosen.

*13 And it cam e to pass when they were all baptized; and had com e up out of the water, **the Holy Ghost did fall upon them, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and with fire.***

*14 And **behold, they were encircled about as if it were by fire; and it came down from heaven, and the multitude did witness it, and did bear record; and angels did come down out of heaven and did minister unto them.***

15 And it came to pass that while the angels were ministering unto the disciples, behold, Jesus came and stood in the midst and ministered unto them.

16 And it came to pass that he spake unto the multitude, and commanded them that they should kneel down again upon the earth, and also that his disciples should kneel down upon the earth.

17 And it came to pass that when they had all knelt down upon the earth, he commanded his disciples that they should pray.

18 And behold, they began to pray; and they did pray unto Jesus, calling him their Lord and their God.

19 And it came to pass that Jesus departed out of the midst of them and went a little way off from them and bowed himself to the earth, and he said:

20 Father, ***I thank thee that thou hast given the Holy Ghost unto these whom I have chosen; and it is because of their belief in me that I have chosen them out of the world.***

21 Father, I ***pray thee that thou wilt give the Holy Ghost unto all them that shall believe in their words.***

22 Father, ***thou hast given them the Holy Ghost because they believe in me; and thou seest that they believe in me because thou hearest them, and they pray unto me; and they pray unto me because I am with them.***

23 And now Father, I pray unto thee for them, and also for all those who shall believe on their words, that they may believe in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one.

This was certainly an extraordinary spiritual event. Was this the first time that these men experienced the baptism of fire? The record does not say, but based on what we do know of them this was probably not the first time for Nephi and perhaps many, if not all, of the rest. Nothing says there is only one such event per person. There is some indication that the cleansing or remission of sins may be renewed from time to time, which we'll discuss later. However, we know of no clear answer to this, either in the scriptures or from spiritual experiences.

On the question of whether the change is an imperceptible process or a recognizable, discernible event, most church members who have a view on the subject seem to believe that the baptism of fire is a process that occurs unbeknownst to the recipient rather than a powerful, life-changing, personal spiritual experience and cite as support for that view the Savior's statement in 3 Nephi 9:20 wherein He refers to "... the Lamanites, ... [who] .. were baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not." From the time that we began to seek for understanding about the Baptism of the Spirit this scripture has puzzled us because every other scripture on the subject either explicitly describes or strongly implies that the baptism of the spirit or of fire is a distinct, powerful, personal experience, rather than something that happens slowly, gradually and unbeknownst to the recipient. So we began to try to identify the specific event to which the Savior was referring.

One of the first questions we asked was whether the event was included in the Book of Mormon record. Although the references are vague at best, we began by assuming that the event to which the Savior referred was in the record, otherwise we would be forever in the dark on the meaning unless one obtained the explanation by personal revelation. And, given the attention that the Lord has given to making and preserving this record we reasoned that the event to which He was referring simply had to be in the book.

The next question is what event was it? A good friend who had pondered the same question for seventeen years after he experienced the mighty change then shared with me the answer that the Spirit had led him to. He pointed out that in the former version of the scriptures, the footnotes on this verse referenced Helaman 5:45 and Ether 12:14. Unfortunately neither of these references are now separately indicated on this verse, instead the reference in the new scriptures is to the topical Guide subject "Holy Ghost, Baptism of" which is extremely lengthy and which only the most diligent student will wade through.

After perusing the references we concluded that the event had to be the powerful experience recorded in Helaman 5. There, beginning with verse 21, we read of a series of tremendously powerful spiritual events experienced simultaneously by about three hundred Lamanites who had gone as a lynch mob to the prison to kill Nephi and Lehi. When the mob got to the prison they were “overshadowed with a cloud of darkness, and a solemn fear came upon them.” Then in verses 40-49 we learn that the “cloud of darkness” was removed from around them; then “they were encircled about, yea every soul, by a pillar of fire” and “filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory”, and “filled with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words”; finally, they were even administered to by angels! This account certainly shows that those who experienced these extraordinary events were aware that they’d had such experiences. After rereading this experience **we concluded that the Savior’s statement that they “knew it not” could ONLY have meant that this group of Lamanites did not know that their miraculous experience was caused by and properly named or known as the baptism of fire, rather than the meaning that is commonly accepted in the church that the experience happened to them in such a way that they did not sense it or perceive it.**

As further evidence that these three hundred people knew that they’d had an extraordinary experience let us read on in this account.

*Helaman 5:49-50 And there were about three hundred souls who saw and heard these things; and they were bidden to go forth and marvel not, neither should they doubt.
50 And it came to pass that they did go forth, and did minister unto the people, declaring throughout all the regions round about ALL THE THINGS WHICH THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN, insomuch that the more part of the Lamanites were convinced of them, because of the greatness of the evidences which they had received.*

And again in Chapter 6 we encounter the following in verse 4:

4 And it came to pass that many of the Lamanites did come down into the land of Zarahemla, and did declare unto the people of the Nephites THE MANNER OF THEIR CONVERSION, and did exhort them to faith and repentance.

Certainly the only way that those who were part of the three hundred could testify of “the things which they had heard and seen” and also describe “the manner of their conversion, was that they knew what had happened to them.

My friend experienced similar confusion during his born again experience. As he told me about it, he explained, “The experience lasted six days. It was near the end that the Lord actually revealed to me that I had been baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost.” In other words, until the spirit explained to him exactly what his extraordinary experience was in scriptural terms he too did not know exactly what it was that was happening to him.

To the best of our ability to understand the scriptures, **the scriptural evidence appears to be unanimous that the baptism of the spirit is NOT AN IMPERCEPTIBLE PROCESS but is a separate, distinct, clearly identifiable, and extraordinarily powerful PERSONAL SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.** In short, if you have experienced it you know it. You may not know what it was, but you will definitely know that something happened to you.

To those who may wish to advance a different point of view, all we can say is that our desire is to understand whatever the truth is and are most interested in the scriptural and other supporting evidence for other possibilities. But, after all, it is not our views that matter. What matters is the way things really are. And that is what we have sought to consider in this work.

Is it possible that some may receive the baptism of the spirit without knowing that anything has happened? Obviously we do not know all things so the only honest answer we can

give is, “We don’t know.” **We do know however, that we can not find in the scriptures even a single scriptural incident or discussion that supports the proposition that the actual baptism of the spirit is an unperceived process!** One considering this question has to ask why every single one of the scriptural passages describing instances of such baptism are either explicitly or implicitly descriptions of a discernible event rather than of an imperceptible process? As we considered our experiences and the scriptures quoted here and elsewhere throughout this work **the only answer to that question that makes any sense to us is that Heavenly Father really wants us to understand that the change is an extraordinary blessing that He wants us to understand and to receive. If this is not true then why are the scriptures and particularly the three modern day scriptures, especially 2 Nephi chapters 31 & 32 and 3 Nephi chapters 9-27, filled with directions about and reports of the experience?**

As further evidence that the mighty change is a powerful and clearly discernible experience, has not the Lord, our master teacher, likened the mighty change to two vital life experiences, birth and baptism in such phrases as being “BORN of the spirit” and as the “BAPTISM of fire and the Holy Ghost”? Does not everyone know the dates of their own birth and baptism? Would not Adam, Enos, Alma the younger, King Benjamin’s people, and the twelve Nephite disciples chosen by the Savior, among many others, remember forever the occasions of their baptisms by fire as spiritual rebirths?

Both baptism in water and birth are identifiable events that occur at the culmination of processes. With baptism the preceding process is the development of faith which Alma in Chapter 32 of Alma has so beautifully likened to a seed and its germination and development. With birth the preceding processes are conception and a nine month gestation. With the mighty change the preceding process is known as repentance which culminates in receiving a forgiveness of your sins and the mighty change of the baptism of fire.

Perhaps you are wondering why are we taking so much time on this point? It is because we have encountered so very many who vigorously resist believing that the mighty change, the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is a discernible event or experience. All of us who have contributed to this effort have struggled to share it with others for as long as we have had understanding about it. Would you be surprised to hear that more often than not we have encountered stiff resistance? However, on this we’re in some pretty good company. The following well known statement of the Prophet Joseph shows that he also wrestled with the difficulties of teaching things that people were not eager to hear.

But there has been great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. It has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn dodger for a wedge, and a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand.

I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them, after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all. How many will be able to abide a celestial law, and go through and receive their exaltation, I am unable to say, as many are called, but few are chosen. Teachings of The Prophet Joseph Smith, pg. 331.

IS THERE ANOTHER WAY

We now shift our focus to the question of whether or not there is another way. What about Moroni 7:47-48 on charity, is that possibly another way? Let us examine carefully these important verses:

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail —

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47 But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath BESTOWED upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen

Let's look at the statements concerning the effects on those who have charity, which are, (1) "it shall be well with them", (2) they "become the sons of God", (3) "when he shall appear we shall be like him", and (4) "we may be purified even as he is pure." That certainly sounds like the descriptions of those in the celestial kingdom that we have encountered in Moses 6 and elsewhere. Next, the steps listed here for receiving it are (1) "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart" and (2) be a "true follower of his Son". As we have seen that is quite similar to the steps mentioned in 3 Nephi 19 for receiving the baptism of the spirit. Third, when one receives charity it comes as a "bestowal" (or gift) from the Father. This also is the same as the gift of the Holy Ghost. Finally one of the effects of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost is to be filled with the pure love of Christ. In short, it is difficult to find any significant differences between the experience of receiving a bestowal of charity and the baptism of the spirit; thus we conclude that the two experiences appear to be substantially if not exactly identical.

JUST HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS CHANGE

The last question of "Just how important is this change, really?" brings us to some additional important scriptures.

First, several key scriptures show that the baptism of the spirit brings about the remission of sins and the mighty change of heart that results in being born again. Following is a sampling of some of these:

John 3:5: *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born of water AND of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.***

2 Nephi 31:17: *Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water, and **then cometh a remission of our sins by fire and the Holy Ghost.***

Mosiah 4:2-3: *And they had viewed them selves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice saying: **0 have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.***

3 *And it came to pass that **after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience,** because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which King Benjamin had spoken unto them.*

Mosiah 27:23-29: *And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:*

24 *For, said he, **I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.***

25 *And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that **all mankind, yea men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;***

26 **And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.**

27 I say unto you, **unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.**

28 Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting night unto death, the Lord in mercy, hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and **I am born of God.**

29 My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. **My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.**

3 Nephi 12:2: And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

For those who thought that water baptism brought about the remission of sins sufficient for entrance into the Celestial kingdom consider the Prophet Joseph's striking statements on baptism.

You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half-that is the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Savior says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." according to Galatians 1:8. Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith at pg. 314.

I will leave this subject here, and make a few remarks on the subject of baptism. The baptism of water, without the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost attending it, is of no use; they are necessarily and inseparably connected. An individual MUST be born of water and the Spirit in order to get into the kingdom of God. TPJS at pg. 360.

Every man lives for him self. Adam was made to open the way of the world, and for dressing the garden. Noah was born to save seed of every thing, when the earth was washed of its wickedness by the flood; and the Son of God came into the world to redeem it from the fall. But except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. This eternal truth settles the question of all men's religion. A man may be saved, after the judgment, in the terrestrial kingdom, or in the celestial kingdom, **but he can never see the celestial kingdom of God, without being born of water and the Spirit.** He may receive a glory like unto the moon, [i.e. of which the light of the moon is typical], or a star, [i.e. of which the light of the stars is typical], but he can never come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, **unless he becomes as a little child and is taught by the Spirit of God.** TPJS at pg. 12

From these scriptures and the teachings of the Prophet Joseph it seems that baptism is really a two part ordinance and that the baptism in water portion is essentially ineffective or useless without the other part, the baptism of the spirit. In other words, it appears that one has not even completed the ordinance of baptism until one has received the baptism of the spirit.

The reason, of course, that one cannot enter the celestial kingdom without the baptism of the Holy Ghost is that is what brings about one's remission of sins and cleansing so that one is without spot and blemish and able to be in the presence of our Father in Heaven, into whose presence no unclean thing may come.

We have sought to share some of the evidence showing that receiving the baptism of the spirit is a vital, essential, even critical step in one's personal spiritual journey. It seems so essential that according to the original Nephi, one has not even entered into the "strait and

narrow path which leads to eternal life” until one has received both baptisms. Consider his words in 2 Nephi 31:17-19:

17 ... For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water, and **then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.**

18 And then are in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

19 And now, my beloved brethren, after have gotten in to this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? I say unto you nay;

In fact, some scriptures, such as Moroni 6:4, state that until one has received the baptism of fire one is NOT truly a member of the church of Christ.

Moroni 6:4: *And AFTER they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and **CLEANSED by the power of the Holy Ghost THEY WERE NUMBERED AMONG THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST** and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.*

An article by President Benson published in the October 1989 Ensign seems to say essentially the same thing in the following words:

“In the usual sense of the term, Church membership means that a person has his or her name officially recorded on the membership records of the Church. By that definition, we have more than six million members of the Church.

*But the Lord defines a member of His kingdom in quite a different way. In 1828, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, He said, “**Behold, this is my doctrine - whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church.**” (D&C 10:67) To Him whose Church this is, membership involves far more than simply being a member of record.*

I would therefore like to set forth important concepts that we must understand and apply if we are to truly repent and come unto the Lord. “A Mighty Change of Heart”, Pres. Benson, Ensign, Oct. ‘89, pg 3.

We also think it important to touch on the significance of “sanctification”, one of the many synonyms for this change. One day as we were considering Moses 6:59 and 3 Nep 27:20, the two key scriptures on sanctification, our eyes were opened as we read and reread the words that we are “sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost” and were pondering the connection between the baptism of the Holy Ghost and sanctification. As we were doing this the spirit whispered that they were the same thing. We finally understood that we are sanctified or cleansed by the baptism of the spirit which brings about a remission of sins, which is the necessary cleansing. In other words, the term “sanctification” is simply the term that is used to describe the state one is in when and as one receives the baptism of the spirit. Read carefully now these two key scriptures. Moses 6:59 is Enoch quoting from the record of Adam.

59 *That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so become of dust a living soul, **even so must be born again into the kingdom of water, and of the spirit, and be cleansed by even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;***

3 Nep 27:19-21 is from the Savior’s own summary of the Gospel.

19 *And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.*

20 Now this is the com mandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and COME UNTO ME and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

*21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **THIS IS MY GOSPEL** and ye know the things that ye must **do** in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye **do**;*

If you want an interesting exercise in appreciating the central importance of sanctification, check out how many key verses commonly used over and over again in the church include a reference to being sanctified. You might begin by reviewing the oath and covenant of the priesthood in D&C 84:33-39, which specifically includes in verse 33 being “sanctified by the spirit” as an essential element to receiving the spiritual blessings especially including the priesthood powers there spoken of.

Sanctification is essential for entering the Celestial Kingdom. In D&C 88:21, the Lord plainly states that unless one has been sanctified one can not obtain the celestial kingdom:

*21 And they who are **not sanctified** through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, **MUST inherit another kingdom**, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.*

Is such an event the only way for we as baptized members of the church to become eligible for the Celestial Kingdom as D&C 88:21, John 3:5, and Mosiah 27:27, quoted earlier, indicate? From what we have read it seems that is certainly what the Prophet Joseph taught. Some have suggested that it may not be strictly true that every person who will be exalted must personally experience the baptism of spirit in view of the experience of Joseph Smith with his brother Alvin, described in D & C 137 which teaches us that ultimately we are judged on the bona fide desires of our heart. There Joseph very briefly describes a vision he had of the celestial kingdom in which he saw his brother Alvin present and asked the Lord how that was possible since Alvin “had departed this life before” the restoration of the Gospel. To that question the Lord gave this answer:

7 Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God;

8 Also all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom;

*9 **For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to the desire of their hearts.***

One can see a clear distinction between Alvin’s situation as compared to the situation that baptized members of the church are in. Whether this is a distinction that the Lord strictly follows (the language, by explicitly describing this distinction, certainly suggests that He does) we simply do not know. Strictly from a personal point of view we would like to believe that there are other ways. However, we must acknowledge that we simply have not been able to find anything in the way of scriptural support or even reliable personal experiences in support of that proposition.

Now, having read the preceding quotes from the scriptures and the Prophet Joseph, would you care to try to state in your own words your thoughts on just how important you think this change is, really?

What we have sought to do here is ask what we think are some worthwhile questions and then refer to what appears to us to be some relevant scriptures and prophetic teachings as we seek for the answers. We think that these questions and the

material discussed will certainly get your attention, just as it has ours, about both the reality and importance of this change known by so many different names.

If you would like even more scriptures about the central importance of this mighty change then please turn to Chapter 23 entitled "One More Time - A Review" and read carefully pages 23-1 through 23-5. There we show it's importance from four separate statements of the perfected, resurrected Christ on precisely what His gospel is.

Our whole purpose is to do our best to provide sufficient information to enable those who so desire to personally experience this mighty change. As with all blessings the Lord has clearly stated that there are laws which govern receipt of His blessings.

D&C 130:20-21 There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated. And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.

Our individual searches for understanding of the laws governing this mighty change began as we each became aware from the rarity of this change among those with whom we were acquainted that **the "law" of receiving this blessing was far more than simply being baptized in water and receiving a blessing containing the instruction to receive the Holy Ghost**

In Part II we will identify and discuss each of the simple scriptural elements that are the predicates of receiving this vital gift. We will also explore many of the different aspects and effects of this truly mighty change.

In case you are still wrestling with or perhaps even resisting the reality that the mighty change is a clearly discernible, even observable, powerful spiritual experience, perhaps you might ask just who it might be that might want you to believe that it is a gradually occurring imperceptible process that occurs over a long time? For, if it is an event or a short process of a few hours or days then surely you must give it your attention. However, if one can be persuaded to believe that he (or she) can not know whether or not he has experienced it because it is an imperceptible process, would he not also then readily accept the idea that he must have already experienced it, because, after all, he (or she) is a valiant, faithful member of the Lord's true church, isn't he? (Could this possibly be pride?) Could not this then lead to apathy and indifference towards the whole idea, for, if it is a very long, imperceptible process, there really is not any reason for one to hurry or be concerned, is there?

Can you see the possible application of the sober warning that Nephi wrote to us more than 2500 years ago?

2 Nephi 28:20-21 For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

*21 And others will he pacify, and **LULL THEM AWAY INTO CARNAL SECURITY, THAT THEY WILL SAY: ALL IS WELL IN ZION; YEA, ZION PROSPERETH, ALL IS WELL - and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away CAREFULLY down to hell.***

Can you see how our Adversary can win by getting people to believe such things as, (1) You have till the beginning of the Millenium, so why hurry?, or (2) You have until the END of the Millenium, so what's the rush?, or (3) The process is eternal, so take your time?

Do you think that procrastination in this matter serves our interests or those of our Adversary? Has not Amulek told us,

Alma 34:35 For behold, if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil, AND HE DOTHS SEAL YOU HIS.

Is The Change Really An Event

There is yet another delusion that causes great confusion among some. This is the belief that those who have experienced the mighty change should now be perfect. As discussed earlier, the mighty change is only the BEGINNING as we have only just entered the gate onto the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. 2 Nephi 31:17-18. At this point we have just been reborn spiritually and are spiritually only little children. We now have to mature spiritually and like all children will make many mistakes along the way.

Hopefully, our detailing the abundance of evidence that the mighty change known by so many names is a real, identifiable, discernible, landmark event or experience is helpful. In our personal discussions **we have found that the biggest single barrier to understanding was the belief that it was an imperceptible process rather than a discernible event or experience.** It is our hope that by addressing the matter directly at the beginning and by showing you the wealth of evidence that it is a profound, discernible event or experience, that you can then more readily follow the detailed discussion in Part II of the steps, elements or components of preparing and seeking for that change rather than repeatedly rehashing the “imperceptible process versus discernible event” question.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT TIME IS IT?

No one knows for certain (at least no one who's talking) the date or time on which any of the forthcoming events prophesied in the scriptures will actually occur. Notwithstanding this, from the signs of the times anyone with eyes to see can see that there is a great need to increase one's spiritual powers by enjoying the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost.

About 1988 I reread all of President Benson's conference addresses from the time he became the prophet. I saw clearly an oft repeated theme to be both temporally (that is food storage and so on) and spiritually prepared to the fullest extent of our capabilities. His messages on spiritual preparation are framed in terms of the instruction to come unto Christ, with a constant repetition of the steps necessary to accomplish that, namely reading the scriptures with emphasis on the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, cleansing the inner vessel (repentance), prayer, and so on.

The phrase "come unto Christ" is simply another one of the many ways of referring to applying the Savior's atonement to oneself by obtaining a remission of sins through completing the ordinance of baptism by receiving the second half of it in the baptism of fire. Incidentally, starting about 1988 my own awareness of the importance of the baptism of the Spirit was keenly focused by reading the Book of Mormon about four times within twelve months or so, and in particular Third Nephi which contains an extraordinary number of key scriptures on the baptism of the spirit.

Nor is there any great secret about why the urgency. My own best guesstimate (and that is ALL this is) is that the sixth thousand year period could close on or about April 5, 2001. The basis for my statement concerning the April 5, 2001 date is based on a three step analysis. First, we know from D&C 20:1 that the Savior was born on April 6, possibly in 1 AD (there is no year designated "0 A.D") and that our current calendar is correct. [April 6, 1 BC is also a strong candidate but I favor slightly the 1 AD possibility and so have used it for the purposes of suggesting a ballpark date in this discussion. If the Savior was born 4/6 of 1 BC then 4/6/1830 was the first day of the 1831st year after His birth but if He was born 4/6 of 1 AD then 14/6/1830 was the first day of the 1830th year after His birth. For those who wish to review the large volume of work on the Savior's birthdate I suggest starting with an excellent article by John P. Pratt entitled "Passover, Was It Symbolic Of His Coming?" in the January 1994 Ensign beginning at page 38.]

Second, from D&C 77:7 we learn that each of the seven seals is a precise thousand year period as determined by our present calendar. However, the one missing element is reliable information on the precise date when any of the seals opened or closed. But, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Savior's birth could well have been the exact day of the beginning of the fifth thousand year period. I wish to emphasize that this assumption is based on Father's pattern and practice, well documented throughout the scriptures, of giving great significance to many symbols including dates. There is no date more important than April 6. If in fact, the day of the Savior's birth was the day on which the fifth seal opened then the sixth thousand year period should end on an April 5, possibly in the year 2001. However, if that date is not exactly accurate, it probably is not off the mark by very much. We have already seen extraordinary events and they will certainly increase, to and including massive, even cataclysmic natural disasters. For example, according to Rev. 6:12-16 the awesomely terrifying world wide earthquake there described will yet occur during the sixth seal.

In an earlier version of this Chapter that appeared in the first three printings I stated that the seventh thousand year period opened immediately upon the close of the sixth seal and that

What Time Is It?

the Savior's return in glory occurred some unknown period of time after the opening of the seventh seal. Although I did not say so, my own private opinion was that the Savior's return in glory on the Mount of Olives was likely roughly from 20 to 50 years away. However, during July 1993 I learned that there is a substantial scriptural basis for concluding that the Savior's return in glory may well occur a great deal sooner, even no later than the close of the sixth seal.

For whatever it's worth, perhaps you might be interested in what caused me to rethink my own tentative conclusions on just how close the winding up really is. These ideas quite suddenly came into my mind one day in mid July 1993 when I was pondering where in the scriptures there might be some solid evidence that the seventh seal opened BEFORE the sixth seal closed. Until then I had strongly rejected that possibility, but, I had just finished reading some other material that caused me to reconsider. Anyway, the thoughts that came into my mind as I pondered that question were these. First, we learn from D&C 77:6 that the duration of the temporal existence of the earth (which is really the duration of fallen man's existence on the earth) is seven thousand years. Second, we learn from D&C 29:11 that the Savior "will dwell in righteousness with men on earth A THOUSAND YEARS" and in D&C 88:110 that "Satan shall be bound ... and shall not be loosed for the space of A THOUSAND YEARS." Finally, it seems apparent that Christ's dwelling with man on the earth begins with His return in glory on the Mount of Olives AFTER all of the judgments described in Revelations and that the thousand year period of Satan being bound also begins about, perhaps even exactly at, that same time. Finally, at the close of the sixth seal it would appear that there may only be one thousand years left of the earth's temporal existence. Thus, if these statements in the D&C can be relied on as being precise (I know of no reason why they can't be), then, in the absence of other facts one is led to the conclusion that THE LATEST DATE on which these two separate one thousand year periods COULD BEGIN is the day after the day that the sixth seal closes.

If we assume for the moment that the earlier thoughts about the sixth seal possibly closing on April 5th, 2001, were correct, the next day, April 6, 2001 just happens to be a Friday. Even more interesting is the fact that Passover begins at sundown on Sunday April 8, 2001 and ends at sundown on Sunday, April 15, 2001. Sunday April 15, 2001 is also Easter. I am told that the last time such a concurrence of these two sacred holidays occurred was Sunday, April 3, 1836 when the Savior, Moses, Elias and Elijah all appeared in the Kirtland Temple as recorded in D&C 110.

If the general analysis above is sound (for this purpose the exact date is irrelevant) then it also leads to the conclusion that the seventh seal MUST OPEN before the sixth seal closes. If there is such an "overlap" of the sixth and seventh seals then that would likely also mean that the descriptions in the Book of Revelations of events in the sixth seal, such as earthquakes, which then seem to be repeated in the seventh seal could very well be descriptions of one event that occurs during the overlap period. Perhaps this is, at least in part, what Elder Neal A. Maxwell meant when he referred to "a compression of events" in the close of his April 1992 conference talk.

The reason that I emphasized that the day after the close of the sixth seal was the LATEST DATE is because of uncertainty about where the "little season" falls, D&C 88:111, that follows the thousand years of Satan's binding. During this little season Satan will "gather together his armies", D&C 88:111, and "then cometh the battle of the Great God." D&C 88:113. This little season could occur in the very last part of the seven thousand year period. It could also immediately follow the end of the seven thousand year period which would mean that the total temporal duration of man's existence would be seven thousand years plus the "little season" period. My own opinion is that the little season follows the full seven thousand year period, but I have no further basis for that personal opinion. The point that I want to make is that if the little season is within the seven thousand year period then both the Savior's return and the commencement of His thousand year reign and Satan's thousand years of being bound would have- to happen even sooner.

It may be even more sobering to realize that the startlingly short time scenarios suggested above are completely consistent with President Benson's strikingly powerful testimony that he gave in the October 1988 conference. Now consider carefully and soberly the following portions of that unprecedented and SHARPLY POINTED message, given more than five years ago. See "I Testify", Ensign, Nov. '88, p. 87.

I testify that wickedness is rapidly expanding in every segment of our society. (See D&C 1:114-16; 814:149-53.) It is more highly organized, more cleverly disguised, and more powerfully promoted than ever before. Secret combinations lust for power, gain and glory are flourishing. A secret combination that seeks to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations, and countries is increasing its evil influence and control over America and the entire world. (See Ether 8:18-25)

I testify that the church and kingdom of God is increasing in strength. Its numbers are growing, as is the faithfulness of its faithful members. It has never been better organized or equipped to perform its divine mission.

I testify that as the forces of evil increase under Lucifer's leadership and as the forces of good increase under the leadership of Jesus Christ, there will be growing battles between the two until the final confrontation. As the issues become clearer and more obvious, all mankind will eventually be required to align themselves either for the kingdom of God or for the kingdom of the devil. As these conflicts rage, either secretly or openly, the righteous will be tested. God's wrath WILL SOON shake the nations of the earth and will be poured out on the wicked without measure. (See JS-H 1:145; D&C 1:9.) But God will provide strength for the righteous and the means of escape; and eventually and finally truth will triumph. (See 1 Ne. 22:15-23.)

*I testify that IT IS TIME for every man to set in order his own house both temporally and spiritually. IT IS TIME for the unbeliever to learn for himself that this work is true, that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is the kingdom which Daniel prophesied God would set up in the latter days, never to be destroyed, a stone that would eventually fill the whole earth and stand forever. (See Dan. 2:314-145; D&C 65:2.) IT IS TIME for us, as members of the Church to walk in all the ways of the Lord, to use our influence to make popular that which is sound and to make unpopular that which is unsound. We have the scriptures, the prophets, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. **NOW WE NEED EYES THAT WILL SEE, EARS THAT WILL HEAR, AND HEARTS THAT WILL HEarken TO GOD'S DIRECTION.***

Just as one small example of the things that the Prophet has taught us which it would seem that virtually no eyes have seen, no ears have heard and no hearts have hearkened to, consider the following from three consecutive Conferences beginning in October 1987.

Fathers, another vital aspect of providing for the material needs of your family is the provision you should be making for your family in case of an emergency. Family preparedness has been a long established welfare principle. It is even more urgent today.

*I ask you earnestly, have you provided for your family a year's supply of food, clothing, and where possible, fuel? **The REVELATION to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.** Pres. Benson, "To the Fathers in Israel", Ensign, Nov. '87, p. 149.*

And again the following Conference in April 1988:

And what about family preparedness? Family preparedness has always been an essential welfare principle in perfecting the Saints. Are each of us and our families following, where permitted, the long standing counsel to have sufficient food, clothing, and, where possible, fuel on hand to last at least one year? Pres. Benson, "Come Unto Christ, and Be Perfected in Him", Ensign, May '88, pp 84-85.

And finally, this brief reference from "I Testify" in October 1988:

... I testify that it is time for every man to set in order his own house both TEMPORALLY and spiritually.

What Time Is It?

These three very short and to the point statements in three CONSECUTIVE General conferences from our Prophet were made beginning with the next General Conference IMMEDIATELY following a special letter from the entire First Presidency dated August 12, 1987 on the subject of "Emergency Response Plans and Family Preparedness" was sent to "General Authorities; and the following Priesthood leaders in the U.S. and Canada: Regional Representatives; Stake, Mission and District Presidents; Bishops and Branch Presidents." Included with that letter was a reprint of a talk given by Pres. Benson in the Welfare session of the October 1980 General conference. Following are a few quotes from that talk.

*"We encourage you to be more self-reliant so that, as the Lord has declared, "notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, ... the church may stand independent above all other creatures beneath the celestial world" (D&C 78:114). **The Lord wants us to be independent and self-reliant because these will be days of tribulation. He has warned and forewarned us of the eventuality.***

*... The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah.
... I speak with a feeling of great urgency.*

*Too often we bask in our comfortable complacency and rationalize that the ravages of war, economic disaster, famine, and earthquake cannot happen here. Those who believe this either are not acquainted with the revelations of the Lord, or they do not believe them. **Those who smugly think these calamities will not happen, that they somehow will be set aside because of the righteousness of the Saints, are deceived and will rue the day they harbored such a delusion.***

The Lord has warned and forewarned us against a day of great tribulation and given us counsel, through His servants, on how we can be prepared for these difficult times. Have we heeded His counsel?"

On the subject of being deceived by delusions you might find the material on that topic in the last chapter to be particularly pertinent. Incidentally, being reluctant or even unwilling to hear the word of the Lord is one requirement for being deceived.

Under date of June 24, 1988 the First Presidency sent to all Priesthood leaders in North America another letter on "Preparing for Emergencies" with direction that the letter be read in sacrament meeting. Following are some excerpts from that letter:

Occasionally people speculate about possible disasters, which speculation engenders fear and can cause members to become caught up in emergency preparedness efforts that are not only costly but go beyond the basics consistently taught by the First Presidency. ...

We continue to encourage members to store sufficient food, clothing, and where possible fuel for at least one year. ... we suggest members concentrate on essential foods that sustain life, such as grains, legumes, cooking oil, powdered milk, salt, sugar or honey, and water.

The decision to do more than this rests with the individual.

We encourage you to follow this counsel with the assurance that a people prepared through obedience to the commandments of God need not fear.

For those who have been waiting for the Prophet to speak on this subject and tell us it is time to get ready, are you now satisfied? What more would you have the Prophet do? Do you really think that just before some great calamity the Prophet or another of the brethren will stand up in general conference or in some other way tell us ONCE MORE that now is the time so that the entire world wide membership of the church can frantically begin to get their food storage as happened about fifteen years ago when Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone suggested in conference that the Saints have their food storage by a certain date? Are you not sensitive to the fact that

simply is not how the Lord works, especially in this matter, particularly after He has already told us ?

What time do you now think that it is? Wouldn't you agree that it is time to really pay attention and get about doing what the Lord has commanded us to do?

The importance and worth of the baptism of fire is further emphasized by D&C 145:56-57 wherein the Savior gave us the meaning of the parable of the ten virgins thusly:

And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins. For they that are wise and have received the truth, AND HAVE TAKEN THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THEIR GUIDE, and have not been deceived - verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.

Now how can one "have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide" unless one has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Based on the signs of the times and the statements from our Prophet, does it not appear to you that there is an urgent need for the greatest possible spiritual and temporal preparation for a number of reasons, including loving the Lord, desiring to come unto Him and thereby being spiritually prepared for the unprecedentedly challenging days that are near, even at the door?

ARE YOUR EYES SEEING, YOUR EARS HEARING AND YOUR HEART HEARKENING TO GOD'S DIRECTION THROUGH HIS PROPHET?

CHAPTER 4

CONDEMNATION - WHY WE ARE UNDER IT - AND - HOW TO REMOVE IT

In each of his **FIRST FIVE** conference addresses as Prophet President Benson declared that we are under condemnation, both individually and as a church. "Cleansing the Inner Vessel", "A Sacred Responsibility", and "The Power of the Word", Ensign, May '86 pp. 5, 78 & 82; "The Book of Mormon - Keystone of our Religion" and "The Gift of Modern Revelation", Ensign Nov. '86 pp. 4 & 80. Two years later he said it again. "Flooding The Earth With The Book of Mormon", Ensign Nov. '88 p. 5. In five of these addresses the Lord's Prophet either quoted or referred to the 84th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants wherein the Lord pointedly tells the entire church that it is under condemnation and will remain under condemnation until the church **DOES THE THINGS WHICH THE LORD HAS COMMANDED.**

Considering the great gravity of this message we thought it worthwhile to consider the matter of condemnation in greater detail. Specifically we are interested in precisely why are we under condemnation? And, even more importantly, what do we do to remove the condemnation? We think the scriptures answer these two questions quite clearly. We shall begin with the entire "condemnation scripture" from Section 84.

49 *And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the BONDAGE OF SIN.*
50 *And by this you may know they are UNDER THE BONDAGE OF SIN, BECAUSE THEY COME NOT UNTO ME.*
51 *FOR WHOSO COMETH NOT UNTO ME IS UNDER THE BONDAGE OF SIN.*
52 *And whoso receiveth not my voice is not acquainted with my voice, and is not of me.*
53 *And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that THE WHOLE WORLD GROANETH UNDER SIN AND DARKNESS even now.*
54 *And YOUR MINDS IN TIMES PAST HAVE BEEN DARKENED BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF, and BECAUSE YOU HAVE TREATED LIGHTLY THE THINGS YOU HAVE RECEIVED -*
55 *Which VANITY AND UNBELIEF HAVE BROUGHT THE WHOLE CHURCH UNDER CONDEMNATION.*
56 *And THIS CONDEMNATION RESTETH UPON THE CHILDREN OF ZION, EVEN ALL.*
57 *And THEY SHALL REMAIN UNDER THIS CONDEMNATION UNTIL THEY REPENT and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, **NOT ONLY TO SAY BUT TO DO ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN.***
58 *That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion.*
59 *For shall the children of the kingdom pollute My holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay.*

Consider also this forceful verse in which the Lord tells us specifically what causes "pollution."

*D&C 101:6 Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore **by these things they polluted their inheritances.***

We emphasized those parts of this scripture that explain why we are under condemnation, and what we have to do to remove that condemnation. Notice, in verses 49 through 56 the emphasis about being under the bondage of sin. Now, recall our earlier discussion that the way that one receives a remission of sins is through the baptism of spirit or fire.

Beginning with verse 56 the Lord tells us how to get out of bondage. First, we must repent. We must remember the new covenant and especially the Book of Mormon. Vs 57. We
Condemnation

think one of the key reasons for the emphasis on the Book of Mormon is the great clarity of the information contained therein about the mighty change, especially in 3rd Nephi. **In fact, we think that the single greatest thing that 3rd Nephi adds to the four gospels is the wealth of information about this mighty change.**

Finally, in verse 58 the Lord tells us that we must bring forth “fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom.” Is not the “fruit” here referred to those who are cleansed from sin and without spot or blemish so that they may dwell in Heavenly Father’s kingdom? Consider just a few key verses that explain what this “fruit” is.

Moses 1:39 For behold, this is my work and my glory — to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.

D & C 64:2 For verily I say unto you, I will that ye should overcome the world:

D & C 76:40-42 And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us -

41 That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

*42 That **through him all might be saved** whom the Father had put into his power and made by him;*

Does it now seem as clear to you as it does to us that one of the main things, if not indeed **THE primary thing, which MOST church members have failed to DO is to comprehend, desire, diligently seek for and OBTAIN their remission of sins through the Baptism of the Spirit?**

Following the idea that we are and remain under the condemnation of sin until we receive our own remission of sins, let us consider other relevant verses, such as those found in D & C 63:60-64.

60 Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ.

61 Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips -

62 For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority.

*63 Wherefore, **let the church repent of their sins, and I, the Lord, will own them; otherwise they shall be cut off.***

*64 Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit; and in this there is no condemnation, and ye receive the **Spirit** through prayer; wherefore, without this there remaineth condemnation.*

Consider further Moroni 8:24-26:

*24 Behold, my son, this thing ought not to be; for **repentance is unto them that are under condemnation and under the curse of a broken law.***

*25 And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling **the commandments bringeth remission of sins;***

*26 And the **remission of sins** bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter **filleth with hope** and perfect love, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.*

Another relevant set of verses is found in D & C 82:1-4: Notice again the contrasting of forgiving of trespasses and sins versus remaining under condemnation.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, my servants, that inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you.

2 Nevertheless, there are those among you who have sinned exceedingly; yea, even all of you have sinned; but verily I say unto you, beware from henceforth, and refrain from sin, lest sore judgments fall upon your heads.

3 For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and **he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation.**

4 Ye call upon my name for revelations, and I give them unto you; and inasmuch as ye keep not my sayings, which I give unto you, become transgressors; and **justice and judgment are the penalty which is affixed unto my law.**

Now, dear reader, if you do not yet see these scriptures from the same viewpoint that we do, we would only ask that you not berate us for the things that we see in them. However, to us it is plainly evident that we are under the condemnation or bondage of sin until we remove that condemnation by individually obtaining our own remission of sins in the manner set forth in the scriptures. **In fact, to us it is clear that obtaining our own remission of sins is EXACTLY AND PRECISELY what the Lord wants us to “...DO according to that which I have written -- That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom;“ D & C 84:57-58.**

Now to Part II and the detailed discussion of the elements of the law upon which receipt of this vital blessing are predicated.

PART II

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The change in its many aspects and the elements of the process one must undergo to receive or experience this extraordinary change.

CHAPTER 5

RIGHTEOUSNESS

“And blessed are all they who do HUNGER and THIRST after RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED with the HOLY GHOST.”

Righteousness should be the primary goal of every Latter-Day Saint. What does it mean to hunger and thirst after righteousness? This seems to imply an intense desire. The Lord instructed Joseph Smith, Sr.:

Therefore, IF ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work. D&C 4:3

Wanting to serve God apparently is necessary in order to be called to the work. And the Lord said that a person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is blessed.

There is another dimension that intensifies desire. That dimension is fasting. Is not fasting HUNGERING and THIRSTING? What is the primary purpose of fasting? TO BECOME RIGHTEOUS. This is necessary in order to be an influence for good in the lives of others. In other words, a person must set his own life in order so that he can influence others for good. The Savior wanted Peter to understand this principle when He instructed:

When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. Luke 22:32

Peter had to change his own life, and be endowed with power from on high, before he could have any REAL effect in the lives of others. On the day of Pentecost, the power of the Holy Ghost was received. (Acts 2:4) Peter was changed; he was converted. He was now qualified to strengthen his brethren.

Righteousness seems to be connected to serving God. How often do we do something and not feel quite right about the outcome? It just didn't go as expected. Something seems to go wrong. If we could learn to analyze our conduct perhaps righteousness would be easier to obtain. If we can discover the facets of righteousness we will be able to improve our behavior. Of what does righteousness really consist?

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS FORMULA

OBEDIENCE + PROPER ATTITUDE + PURE MOTIVE = RIGHTEOUSNESS

Remember that our goal is personal righteousness. In order to obtain it we must learn to be obedient, develop a proper attitude and purify our motives.

OBEDIENCE

Obedience has been referred to as the first law of Heaven. Paul tells us that even the Savior had to learn this principle:

Though he were a Son, yet LEARNED HE OBEDIENCE by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him. Hebrews 5:8,9

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven but he that DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER, who is in heaven. (III Nephi 14:21)

And to us in our day:

I, the Lord am bound when ye DO WHAT I SAY; but when ye do not what I say ye have no promise. (D&C 82:10)

Righteousness

From the above quotations it is apparent that the Lord expects obedience, but it is one thing to be obedient voluntarily and another to be intimidated to obedience. The Lord wishes voluntary obedience. He wants us to serve Him because we want to, not because He or someone else wants us to. It must be our desire. This leads us to the second facet of righteousness - PROPER ATTITUDE.

PROPER ATTITUDE

Attitude could be defined as the Spirit in which an act is performed. When an act is performed with the proper attitude, obedience is enhanced. When an act is done with a poor attitude, obedience is desecrated. Was the Lord concerned about a proper attitude? Let Him speak for Himself:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast TWICE A WEEK, I GIVE TITHES of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone that EXALTEH HIMSELF shall be abased; and he that HUMBLETH HIMSELF shall be exalted. (Luke 18:10-14)

Did you notice that the Pharisee was obedient to many laws; however, he was proud that he was better than other men. He wasn't guilty of extortion or being unjust. He lived the law of chastity, observed the law of the fast twice a week and was an honest tithe payer. But he had a slight problem with attitude. He had a pompous, self-righteous attitude completely void of humility. He just loved to boast to God and tell God what a fine fellow he was. He was living the letter of the law, but the proper spirit or attitude was missing. Did not Paul teach:

For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life? (II Cor 3:6)

You can have obedience without proper attitude, but according to the formula you do not have righteousness. Mormon gives us added insight on this subject:

For behold, God hath said a man being evil cannot do that which is good; for if he offereth a gift, or prayeth unto God, except he SHALL DO IT WITH REAL INTENT it profiteth him nothing. For behold, IT IS NOT COUNTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS. For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he has retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God. (Moroni 7:6-8)

Mormon tells us that gifts given grudgingly and prayers offered without real intent are not counted as righteousness. Why? Because they are not done in the proper spirit. The attitude is not right. Although obedience was rendered it could not be classified as righteousness. A bad attitude cancels an obedient act. Mormon went so far as to say it was counted as evil.

We will now examine the third facet of righteousness - PURE MOTIVE.

PURE MOTIVE

In purifying the motive we go as far as HUMANLY POSSIBLE to make the circle of righteousness complete. Motive answers the question why. Why do I attend church? Why do I pay my tithing? Why do I keep the Word of Wisdom? Why do I observe the Sabbath day? Why do I read the scriptures? Why do I pray? Why do I fast?

Let's examine some of the possibilities.

PURE MOTIVE (right reason)

IMPURE MOTIVE (wrong reason)

Why do I attend church?

To worship God. It makes me feel important.

Develop my ability to better contacts. Develop business

serve God.

(Priestcraft)

My spouse wants me to.

Why do I pay tithing?

I want to help build up the successful kingdom of God. To show the Bishop how

am. I

It is necessary to become a leader and that's what I

want.

To be with the "in" group in the ward or church.

Why do I read the scriptures?

It's the key to serving others. To show how brilliant I am.

To understand the Lords viewpoint. To put so and so down.

Motives are difficult to evaluate. It is absolutely impossible to evaluate them in others, unless they tell us or through the power of discernment the Lord makes it known to us because the motive is hidden in the mind. Sometimes it is even difficult to examine our own motives because of our perfecting the art of rationalization. Sometimes we have more than one motive. This complicates the picture as well. It is possible to attend church to worship God AND develop business contacts. It is possible to attend tithing settlement to square your account with God AND to boast to the Bishop about your earning power. It is possible to read the scriptures to learn the Lord's teachings AND to demonstrate how brilliant you are. It is possible to accept a speaking assignment to preach the gospel AND to advertise your business from the pulpit. It is possible for the Aaronic Priesthood to attend their meetings to learn AND to get a Duty to God Award and the public praise. It is possible to want to learn about scouting AND want the praise that goes with the Eagle Badge. It is possible to attend church to worship God AND to show off a brand new outfit and to see how many compliments it will bring.

PRIESTHOOD OR PRIESTCRAFT

The motive is so important that if it is impure, priesthood can go through an instant metamorphosis and become priestcraft. That is a very serious crime in the sight of our Heavenly Father. Nephi warned about our motives in this area, as follows:

He com mandeth that there shall be no PRIESTCRAFTS ; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men PREACH and SET THEMSELVES up for a light unto the world, THAT THEY MIGHT GET GAIN AND PRAISE of the world; but THEY SEEK NOT the welfare of Zion. ... But the laborer in Zion shall LABOR FOR ZION; for if THEY LABOR FOR MONEY they shall perish. (II Nephi 26:29,31)

Righteousness

We will now return to the scene of the greatest sermon ever recorded and see what the Lord Himself says about motives. We are standing on the outer fringes of the crowd. Listen, the Savior is speaking.

Take heed that ye do not your ALMS BEFORE MEN, TO BE SEEN OF THEM: OTHERWISE YE HAVE NO REWARD OF YOUR FATHER which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that THEY MAY HAVE GLORY OF MEN. Verily I say unto you, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

And when thou PRAYEST thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, THAT THEY MAY BE SEEN OF MEN. Verily I say unto you, THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly

Moreover, when ye FAST, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, THAT THEY MAY APPEAR UNTO MEN TO FAST. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face:

That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. (Matt 6:1-6, 16-18)

Here the Master calls attention to the impure motives used for giving alms, for praying and for fasting. Were the ones doing this being obedient? Yes. Perhaps their attitudes were good also. But what of their motives? They were fasting, praying and giving alms TO BE SEEN OF MEN. They wanted to appear righteous to their friends. They wanted everyone to know how faithful they were in the observance of the law. In short, they wanted the honor and glory. But who gets the honor and glory? How often we forget, Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt 5:16)

With these three facets in the diadem of righteousness we are now prepared to analyze our every act. Am I being obedient? Is my attitude proper? Are my motives pure? Can we answer yes to all three questions in any given situation? If we can, we are on the right course. If we can't, then we need to alter our course. Let us now look forward to the great promise, "...for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost." (III Nephi 12:6)

We have briefly examined three of the facets of righteousness. Each one of the three facets deal with what we do. Through the exercise of free agency we can choose to be OBEDIENT. We can choose to develop a PRO PER ATTITUDE. We can choose a PROPER MOTIVE for every act. At this point we are still severely handicapped. We are subject to lack of ability, skill, talent, or training. Our personality may be deficient. In short, we have reached the point that Isaiah so aptly described when he recorded as follows:

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our RIGHTEOUSNESSES are as FILTHY RAGS. (Isaiah 64:6)

POWER OF GOD

Don't get discouraged. You see, we have discussed what we accomplish in righteousness. That is the part we do. It is OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. There is another kind of righteousness, GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. Up until now we only have the skeleton of righteousness. That skeleton has to have flesh, muscle, sinew and spirit to give it life. That job is too big for us but it isn't too big for our Heavenly Father. He can endow the skeleton of

righteousness (what we do) with HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS (what He does) and make it live. At this point we will add to the formula. Do you remember?

Obedience + Proper Attitude + Pure Motive + Power of God = Righteousness

Listen as the Savior instructs the Nephite twelve:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and HIS (GOD'S) RIGHTEOUSNESS, and all these things shall be added unto you. (III Nephi 13:33)

The Lord made it plain that it was the righteousness of God that was the important factor. Peter must have understood it well. Do you remember when Peter and John went up into the temple at the hour of prayer?

And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but SUCH AS I HAVE GIVE I THEE; IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH RISE UP AND WALK.

And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. (Acts 3:2-9)

The stir that this miracle caused was no small one. The people that saw that hopeless case walking, leaping and praising God were filled with wonder and amazement. A crowd gathered. Peter used it as an opportunity to preach a powerful sermon. He said:

Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by OUR OWN POWER OR HOLINESS we had made this man walk? (Acts 3:12)

Then Peter chastised them for the part they played in the crucifixion of the Savior. Then he testified:

And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is BY HIM hath GIVEN HIM this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. (Acts 3:16)

Then Peter went on to invite them all to repent and be converted. Peter is now a convert. He has just demonstrated that he could now strengthen the brethren. Remember this is the same Peter that had faltered when attempting to walk on the water. It was the same Peter that had denied knowing the Master on the night of the betrayal. It was the same Peter that had cut off the ear of Malchus. Almost everything that Peter did prior to his conversion seemed wrong. But Peter is no longer JUST PETER. He has been changed by the Power of God through the experience of conversion. With the Power of God he would go and do the Lord's work, the Lord's way with the LORD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. And so it is with every servant of God. It is the Power of God, through the Holy Spirit, that transforms the filthy rags of our righteousness to the shining robes of HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

A WORD OF CAUTION

If there is anything that Satan likes to do, it is to turn things upside down or get them out of proper sequence. Remember that we are hungry and thirsting after righteousness. This is the primary objective. Is there a plausible substitute with which Satan can get us sidetracked? Yes. What is it then? Truth, yes, truth. Are we not rushing about all over the land in a mad search for truth? Is this not the purpose of our educational institutions? But what of righteousness? You don't get a diploma for that, do you? Somehow it seems to have lost its importance. One of the functions of the Holy Ghost is to teach. He always teaches the truth and He gives it to us primarily because of righteousness. Once in a while He will chastize for unrighteousness, however, pure knowledge is a byproduct of righteousness. Hunger and thirst after righteousness and truth will come in its proper order. The Savior expressed it this way:

Then, said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, IF YE CONTINUE IN MY WORD, then are ye my disciples indeed; and YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE. (John 8:31,32)

CHAPTER 6

PIN-POINTING OUR PRESENT CONDITION

"To him that OVERCOMETH will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Revelation 3:21)

Those of you who have been in combat remember, in the heat of battle, how easy it is to get lost. As the battle rages sometimes the lines flow back and forth. Sometimes you can find yourself behind enemy lines. Some have become lost while hunting in the mountains. The weather suddenly closes in and all of the points of reference vanish. It's a frightening experience. Fear crushes in upon you and you wonder if you'll ever get out alive. It's frightening, but at least you know that you're lost. As dangerous as one of these situations might be there is one even more dangerous--to be lost and not know it. In this condition we go merrily on our way believing, "All is well."

Listen as Nephi prophetically warns the children of Zion.

Therefore wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion!

Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well!

Yea, wo be unto him that hearkeneth unto the PRECEPTS OF MEN, and denieth the POWER OF GOD, and the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST! (II Nephi 28:24-27)

Is Nephi talking directly to the Latter-Day Saints? It surely sounds that way. Aren't we the ones that have the gift of the Holy Ghost?

For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift. (D&C 88:33)

Nephi continues:

And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness; and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth lest he shall fall.

Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough! (Nephi 28:28-29)

How many times have you heard the "we have enough" doctrine?

For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give to the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; FOR UNTO HIM THAT RECEIVETH I WILL GIVE MORE: and from them that shall say, WE HAVE ENOUGH, from them SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY EVEN THAT WHICH THEY HAVE.

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, SAVE THEIR PRECEPTS SHALL BE GIVEN BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST. (II Nephi 28:30-31)

Navigation is a process of determining destination relative to our present position. Nephi has zeroed in on the subject of our spiritual position. He doesn't want us to be lost and not know it. However, the Book of Mormon was given to lead us to greater things. Mormon makes this statement in III Nephi 26:6-11:

And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people;

Present Condition

But behold the plates of Nephi do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people.

And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.

*And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, **TO TRY THEIR FAITH,** and IF it shall so be that they **SHALL BELIEVE THESE THINGS, THEN SHALL THE GREATER THINGS BE MADE MANIFEST UNTO THEM.***

*And if it so be that **THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE THESE THINGS, then shall the GREATER THINGS BE WITHHELD FROM THEM, UNTO THEIR CONDEMNATION.***

*Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, **BUT THE LORD FORBADE IT, saying, I WILL TRY THE FAITH OF MY PEOPLE.***

The promise was made that if the Lamanites and Gentiles believed the Lord's teachings in the Book of Mormon, greater things would be made manifest. Have these greater things been made manifest unto us? Obviously not. They are still hidden from us. Over that 160 years, six to eight generations have passed since the coming forth of the Book of Mormon and still the Lord has not given us these greater things. **Why don't we have these greater things?** The Lord has already told us why, just five years to the day after the plates were given into the hands of the prophet Joseph Smith for translation. Listen to His stinging rebuke:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received-Which VANITY and UNBELIEF have brought the whole church under condemnation.

And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all.

And they shall REMAIN UNDER THIS CONDEMNATION UNTIL THEY REPENT AND REMEMBER THE NEW COVENANT, EVEN THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE FORMER COMMANDMENTS WHICH I HAVE GIVEN THEM, not only to SAY, but to DO according to that which I have written -

That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom; otherwise there REMAINETH A SCOURGE AND JUDGMENT TO BE Poured OUT UPON THE CHILDREN OF ZION.

For shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay. (D&C 84:54-59)

Have we treated sacred things lightly? Are we filled with vanity and unbelief? How many have searched the Book of Mormon deeply? Or is it just a dust covered book? Have we remained under this condemnation? Surely. Now what of the scourge and judgments? Were they poured out? History testifies that they were and are still being poured out. The saints were driven from pillar to post until they finally ended up in the valleys of the mountains. Then the government continued to harass them for more than forty years. And what of the modern scourges and judgments? To name them all would be impossible. Here are just a few.

	Witchcraft	Erosion of freedom Corrupt government officials
	Doctorcraft	Lawyercraft Pornography
elders	Children otherwise	disrespecting Drugs, prescribed & Holidays instead of Holy Days
	Politiciancraft	Priestcraft Socialism

Present Condition

		Increasing	Abortion Rampant	crime dishonesty
Super	Sundays	Divorce	Permissiveness	
		Social	Secre t combinations Unem ployment	Diseases
			Corruption of the Arts, Water , air & mind Oppre ssion by children Music & Literature polluti on (Isaia h 3:12)	
		Corrupt	Wom en's liberation	law AIDS

Some of these might seem humorous, but to those who have been touched by them, I assure you that they are not funny. Is there a family in Zion that has been left untouched?

We'll zero in on one more crippling condemnation. Perhaps this one will really pin-point our spiritual position. In the early days of the church, a law was given that would have forever freed the saints from the money lenders. It is referred to as the law of consecration. This law was designed to make us equal in temporal things. This law was rejected by the saints. The Lord tells us why.

Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now. But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are FULL OF ALL MANNER OF EVIL, AND DO NOT IMPART OF THEIR SUBSTANCE, AS BECOMETH SAINTS, TO THE POOR AND AFFLICTED AMONG THEM: And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. And my people must needs be chastened until THEY LEARN OBEDIENCE, IF IT MUST NEEDS BE, BY THE THINGS WHICH THEY SUFFER. (D&C 105:2-6)

Greed and selfishness were their stumbling blocks. They didn't have enough faith in God to share. Are we any different today? What was the consequence or condemnation in this case?

He who is appointed to administer spiritual things, the same is worthy of his hire, even as those who are appointed to a stewardship to administer in temporal things; Yea, even more abundantly, which abundance is multiplied unto them through the manifestations of the Spirit.

Present Condition

Nevertheless, in your temporal things YOU SHALL BE EQUAL, and this NOT GRUDGINGLY, otherwise THE ABUNDANCE of the MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SPIRIT SHALL BE WITHHELD. (D&C 70:12-14)

The saints wouldn't live the law. They were promised that if they lived the law voluntarily they would have the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit. If they lived the law grudgingly they would not have them. **THEY CHOSE NOT TO LIVE IT AT ALL.** HOW MANY MANIFESTATIONS HAVE BEEN WITHHELD FROM US BECAUSE WE DON'T LIVE THE LAW? HOW MANY VISIONS, DREAMS, REVELATIONS, HEALINGS, TESTIMONIES, CONVERSIONS AND SEALINGS HAVE WE SACRIFICED ON THE ALTAR OF GREED AND SELFISHNESS? Only the Lord knows. Some think we don't really need the manifestations of the spirit today. But what does the Lord say?

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter;

Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him, and PURIFY THEMSELVES BEFORE HIM:

To whom he grants this privilege of SEEING AND KNOWING FOR THEMSELVES; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, WHILE IN THE FLESH, they may BE ABLE to BEAR HIS PRESENCE in the world of glory. (D&C 76:114-118)

Now that we have made the attempt to zero in our position Satan should be raging. He doesn't mind our being lost, but he doesn't want us to know that we are lost. Satan's job is to spread doubt, fear, anger and unbelief. If Satan can keep us from finding out where we really are he can make it extremely difficult for us to get where we think we are going. Beware of his promptings. "I don't believe that." "I doubt it." "That couldn't be right." "I belong to the true church. That couldn't be true." Remember what happened to the children of our first parents.

And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and daughters.

*And Satan came among them, saying: I am also a son of God: and he commanded them, saying: BELIEVE IT NOT; **and THEY BELIEVED IT NOT**, and they loved Satan more than God. And men began from that time forth to be carnal, sensual, and devilish. (Moses 5:12-13)*

CHAPTER 7

IS THERE A WAY OUT

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if YE BELIEVE NOT THAT I AM HE, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8:24)

Before we delve into the way out perhaps we should look closely at some of the works of the devil. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, Satan beguiled Eve. He told her that she would not die, but that she would become as the Gods, knowing good from evil. The "would not die" part was a lie. Becoming "as the Gods" was certainly sometime in the future. Knowing "good from evil" was the truth although it would take years of experience to separate the wheat from the chaff. Satan mixed truth and error in this case in order to get Eve to do what he wanted her to do. (Moses 4:6-12) The devil's work is a work of deception. How does he do it?

To the truth he says, "Don't believe that." or "That couldn't be true."

To things that are false he says, "That's logical, isn't it?" In other words, he wants us to believe just the opposite. Isn't he the one that is always turning things upside down?

Does Satan ever tell the whole truth? The answer is no. He always mixes error with truth. He often tells a complete lie, but he never tells the complete truth. Didn't he give Eve a portion of the truth? Yes, mixed with error. He wanted Eve to do something that he thought would frustrate the work of God. But he didn't know the mind of God so he actually gave the work of God a little shove. Yes, Satan does use some truth, but it is always to frustrate the work of God. It must disturb him considerably to use any truth at all, for his very nature compels him to lie.

Does Satan ever do good? If he does it is unintentional. Listen to Mormon on the subject:

But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil work, for he persuadeth NO MAN TO DO GOOD, no, NOT ONE: NEITHER DO HIS ANGELS; NEITHER DO THEY WHO SUBJECT THEMSELVES UNTO HIM. (Moroni 7:17)

Is Satan a thief? There is no doubt he is. What does Satan steal?

He steals your time.

He steals your reputation.

He steals your goods.

He steals your good attitude, and above all

He steals your faith in God, if you let him.

To unmask all of the works of the devil would be a gigantic undertaking, but one more needs to be mentioned. It has been suggested that "discouragement" is the greatest tool of Satan. I sometimes think that Satan is the author of the idea concerning discouragement. Could it be that rebellion is the most efficient tool of Satan? Moses and Joseph Smith tell us why Satan was cast down to the earth:

Wherefore, because that Satan REBELLED AGAINST ME, and sought to destroy the agency of men, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I SHOULD GIVE UNTO HIM MINE OWN POWER: by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of ALL lies, to DECEIVE and to BLIND men, and

to lead them captive AT HIS WILL, even AS MANY AS WOULD NOT HEARKEN UNTO MY VOICE. (Moses 4:3-4)

One third of the host of our Heavenly Father's children made the mistake of rebelling against God. It was the spirit of rebellion that was the big problem. Is that not the number one problem today? We have just witnessed a whole generation of youth in a spirit of rebellion against all constituted authority--parents, government and God. You see, Satan is still hard at work inciting "rebellion". It tripped up one-third of the host of heaven in our pre-mortal life. It is doing the same today. Anyone who will not hearken unto the VOICE OF THE LORD will be led captive AT THE DEVIL'S WILL.

Now let us return to the condemnations and the attitudes that brought them about. A few of them are:

UNBELIEF

WE HAVE ENOUGH OF GOD'S WORD

VANITY

SELFISHNESS

Have we rebelled against believing God?
Have we rebelled about "receiving more of God's Word"?
Have we rebelled against "humility"?
Have we rebelled against "imparting of our substance"?

Do you begin to see how Satan is continuing his rebellious work? Are we helping him? If you are discouraged it is probably because of rebellious attitudes toward the work of God.

LIFTING THE CONDEMNATIONS - CHANGING REBELLIOUS ATTITUDES BELIEF vs UNBELIEF

At the risk of over-simplification I want to suggest that the initial step of faith is simply "choosing to believe". Man was given his agency. He can choose to believe or not to believe. Belief or unbelief is simply a state of mind. It goes something like this. You hear something. The Holy Spirit says, "That's true." The unholy spirit says, "Believe it not." You vote to go one way or another way with a two-thirds majority. The beautiful thing about it is that sometimes when you discover you have been wrong you can call for a recount and change your mind. Listen as Luke tells about the unbelief of Zacharias.

And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And when Zacharias saw the angel, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. (Nothing destroys belief quite as fast as fear.)

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth;

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God; And he shall go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:11-17 - Insp. Vers)

Now Zacharias' prayer had been answered. Elizabeth, like Sarah, was going to have a son in her old age. His great mission was foretold. You would think that Zacharias would have been jumping for joy, but he wasn't. You see, he hadn't believed the angel.

And Zacharias said unto the angel, whereby shall I know this, for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. (Luke 1:18 - Insp. Vers)

Now, how do you like that? An angel was standing before Zacharias giving him the message and he wanted more proof. Can you imagine the fire in the angel's eyes?

*And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.
And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, BECAUSE THOU BELIEVEST NOT MY WORDS which shall be fulfilled in their season. (Luke 1:19-20) (Insp. Vers)*

Zacharias didn't have much time for a recount. The angel Gabriel expected the message to be believed the first time. Sometimes we have time to change our mind and sometimes we don't.

When a person does turn from unbelief to belief a miracle has taken place. Listen as John the Beloved describes this miracle in the calling of Nathanael.

The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.

Now Philip was at Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And Nathanael said unto him, CAN THERE ANY GOOD THING COME OUT OF NAZARETH? Philip said unto him, Come and see. (John 1:43-46 - Insp. Vers)

Now do you get the picture? Nathanael's state of mind is of one of unbelief. He seems to have some very definite ideas about Nazareth and the people who live there. He wasn't afraid to say so either. He didn't rely on tact or diplomacy. He said just exactly what he thought. Although he didn't believe Philip, something seemed to be stirring his curiosity. He just couldn't sit there any longer. Some compelling force drew him toward the Master. How would Jesus react to this candid man of integrity--this unbeliever?

Jesus saw Nathanael coming unto him, and said of him, BEHOLD AN ISRAELITE INDEED, IN WHOM IS NO GUILE! (John 1:47 - Insp. Vers)

What a compliment! We need a few more like him today. We need people who are not afraid to speak their true feelings; people whom you can trust, who are not filled with deceit. Now watch as Nathanael changes from an unbeliever to a believer.

Nathanael said unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answering said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. (John 1:48-49) (Insp. Vers)

Now what did Jesus do? He challenged Nathanael's instant belief.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, BELIEVEST THOU?

Nathanael didn't answer. He didn't have to. The Lord was looking deeply into the eyes of a believer. He knew the situation fully and he said,

Is There A Way Out

*Thou SHALT SEE GREATER THINGS THAN THESE.
And he said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto you, Hereafter ye SHALL SEE HEAVEN
OPEN, AND THE ANGELS OF GOD ASCENDING AND DESCENDING UPON THE SON OF
MAN. (John 1:50-51 - Insp. Vers)*

Do you want to believe like Zacharias or Nathanael? The choice is yours.

THE "WE HAVE ENOUGH" ATTITUDE"

In the past century there has been one of the greatest explosions of knowledge that the world has known. In every field of study it has been difficult just to catalog the new discoveries. We have put men on the moon and brought them safely home. Medical feats have been performed that were unheard of just a short time ago. The potential for the future staggers the imagination. Knowledge is so everywhere present that it is almost impossible for an individual to keep up with his present profession, to say nothing of the thousands of other fields of knowledge that exist. For every problem that has been solved a dozen other problems are brought to the surface that were unknown. The quest for knowledge goes on and on. Specialization increases because we can't cover the whole field. If anyone were to suggest that we stop trying to solve the problems of today's world, someone would call for the men in the white coats. As absurd as this idea may seem in the field of education, yet it has been sold to uncounted generations of the world in the field of religion. The effects have been devastating.

In the meridian of time the Savior came to the earth and introduced the gospel in person. Many believed. Others wrote and recorded the happenings of the day. The power of God was in evidence almost everywhere, but shortly after the death of the apostles, a new doctrine was introduced into the gospel. What was that doctrine? "WE HAVE ENOUGH." "THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE IS FULL." "GOD HAS CEASED SPEAKING." Did the people believe it? Most assuredly. The gospel was to be preached with power in all the nations of the earth, but this one malicious, deceptive doctrine from the father of lies, set the stage for the whole world to be engulfed in darkness. The gospel light sputtered, faded and finally went out. Had not Nephi taught:

For behold, THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD; I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HEARKEN UNTO MY PRECEPTS, AND LEND AN EAR UNTO MY COUNSEL, for they shall learn wisdom; FOR UNTO HIM THAT RECEIVETH I WILL GIVE MORE; and from them that shall say, WE HAVE ENOUGH, FROM THEM SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY EVEN THAT WHICH THEY HAVE. (11 Nephi 28:30)

The intriguing thing is that Nephi didn't write this warning to those people in the meridian of time. He wrote it to us. Do you mean to tell me that Satan would try to bring us to another period of apostasy by the same method he used in the meridian of time? Why not? It worked the first time, didn't it? How many other periods of time in history, of which we are not aware, has it worked? It has worked on every individual that has ever developed the "we have enough" attitude.

And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, THROUGH DISOBEDIENCE, from the children of men, and because of THE TRADITION OF THEIR FATHERS. (D&C 93:39)

We are very much aware of what the "we have enough" tradition did after the death of the apostles in the first century. Let's not let it happen again.

THE VANITY ATTITUDE

Is There A Way Out

People become vain over many things. Vanity does not come from the Lord. Some become vain because they belong to the true church. A young lady moved into our town from California. She was in the eighth grade. The first question she was asked was, "Are you a Mormon?" She had to answer, "No." She was immediately excluded by those who could help her. She never was accepted because she wasn't a Mormon. Perhaps these members of the church were just a little vain about their membership. The opportunity to demonstrate the gospel in their lives, to show love and concern, and to share the gospel was lost because of vanity. After all, they were better than she was.

Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers. (D&C 112:10)

How important is humility? Its lack can cause whole nations not to receive the gospel.

*And again, I say unto you, that whosoever ye shall send in my name, by the voice of your brethren, the Twelve, duly recommended and authorized by you, SHALL HAVE POWER TO OPEN THE DOOR OF MY KINGDOM UNTO ANY NATION whosoever ye shall send them --- INASMUCH AS **THEY SHALL HUMBLE THEMSELVES BEFORE ME**, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit. (D&C 112:21-22)*

If humility is one of the factors that opens nations for the preaching of the gospel, it must also be a factor in opening our own hearts to the gospel.

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 AND WITH THE HOLY GHOST . . . (III Nephi 9:19-20)

Success often makes it difficult to maintain humility. Whenever we are successful we seem to want the whole world to know and we don't have much desire to give the Lord any credit. When we cease giving the Lord the honor and glory for our success--pride and vanity take over. This often happens when we are called to important positions. We not only receive congratulations from our friends, but Satan comes to lavish praise upon us. He says, "Do you know why you were called to this important position?" And we answer, "No, why?" And Satan smiles and says, "Let me tell you why. You are the most righteous person in this whole ward." Shockingly we answer, "I am?" And before another breath is drawn--"I AM!" An instant conversion takes place. Humility hangs her head and walks sorrowfully away. Pride and vanity take over. A whole series of failures are now necessary to undo the unholy conversion. If we could just learn to be successful and humble at the same time, how much more good we could do! Perhaps the key was given in the days of Helaman:

And in the fifty and first year of the reign of the judges there was peace also, save it were the PRIDE which began to enter into the church - not into the church of God, but into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God - And they were lifted up in PRIDE, even to the persecution of many of their brethren. Now this was a great evil, which did cause the more humble part of the people to suffer great persecutions, and to wade through much affliction.

Nevertheless they did FAST and PRAY OFT, and did wax stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God. (Helaman 3:33-35)

SELFISHNESS

Many of the prophets have been asked this question, "What is the greatest need in the world?" Without hesitation they answer, "FAITH IN GOD." Surely no answer could be more

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profound or timely. The answer has been so in all ages of the world. It requires faith in God to overcome selfishness. It has been said that the attitude of selfishness is the underlying motive of all sin. Lack of faith is also a large contributing factor. A thief steals because of selfishness. Does he have faith in God? No. But what of the substance which we earn by our labors. Why should we impart our substance to others who have not earned them by their labors? Don't they need to OVERCOME SELFISHNESS and to develop FAITH IN GOD, too? There are many events happening on the earth today that would lead us to do just the opposite. Inflation is prostituting the value of currency while a recession is throwing thousands of people out of work. Whatever the government planners do to stem one problem aggravates the other. People are becoming fearful. They don't know where to turn. The wisdom of the wise seems to have perished completely. If we continue to look toward the government for the solution to these grave problems we will look in vain. Can we expect solutions from government officials whose actions seem to be wholly selfish? Pay increases seem to go through without a hitch. What about the people of this nation? Are they without fault? Absolutely not. Greed and selfishness are rampant in the land. We have millions of people on the welfare rolls, many of whom could work. Many of the wealthy of the nation are on government subsidies, another word for welfare. In short, it seems to be the spirit of the people of this nation to get all they can from whatever source, honorably or dishonorably. Because of ignorance they think the government is the best source. Perhaps we should consider the words of Alma to his son Helaman:

Cry unto GOD for all thy support . . . (Alma 37:36)

Counsel with the LORD in all thy doings . . . (Alma 37:37)

See that ye LOOK TO GOD AND LIVE . . . (Alma 37:47)

Remember that it is Satan's work to steal our faith and cause us to rebel against God. What should our attitude be toward GIVING or IMPARTING of our substance as the gospel requires? What did the Master say?

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would BORROW OF THEE TURN NOT THOU AWAY. (Matt 5:42)

Now that requires FAITH IN GOD, doesn't it?

THE FAITH OF A LAD

When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many? (John 6:5-9)

Here it appears that something is missing from the account. How did the Master get the loaves and fishes from the lad? Did He just walk over and take them? The Master didn't deal that way with children, did He? Can we envision Him walking over to the lad, kneeling down and looking him right in the eye and saying, "Son, you see all of the people who are here today. They are hungry and need to be fed. Would you give me your loaves and fishes that I might feed them?" Can you imagine the lad's wonderment? "How can this be?" he is thinking. But his eyes are fastened on the eyes of the Master. Never has he looked into such kind, penetrating eyes before. For a reason which he cannot completely understand, he trusts this Man. He knows what he must do. He gives the loaves and fishes to the Master saying simply, "Here." The first miracle is complete. The gift has been offered and accepted. The second miracle is about to begin.

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.

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And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. (John 6:10-14)

This single act of giving multiplied its blessing to more than 5,000 people. And what of the lad? How do you think he felt? He knew he had done what was right. He had put his full trust in the Lord. Had the Lord deserted him? Absolutely not. Had he not eaten with the rest of them? He hadn't lost a thing by giving. Perhaps he had gained. Perhaps he was given the twelve baskets that were left over. Wasn't it his faith that had started the miracle? What do you think?

FAITH TO LOAN

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. (Luke 5:1-3)

What is the Master doing here? He is asking to borrow Simon's ship. After all, he wasn't using it at the moment. Simon is busy, however. He is washing the nets. Perhaps he doesn't want to be bothered, but the Master asks him to thrust the ship out a little from the land. Simon did as asked. He loaned the Master his ship and his service.

And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. (Luke 5:3)

The words of the sermon were not recorded, but what happened next was.

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless AT THY WORD I WILL LET DOWN THE NET. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both ships, so that they began to sink. (Luke 5:4-7)

What did Simon do? Although tired from fishing all night, probably discouraged from the lack of success, inconvenienced by the Savior's request, he loaned Him his ship.

What did the Savior do? After the sermon He demonstrated that He was capable of assisting Simon and his partners in meeting their everyday needs. Fishing was their livelihood, and the Savior rewarded them in that manner. Could it be that GIVING and LENDING are the keys to the KING'S treasury?

THE FAITH OF A WIDOW

Ahab, king of Israel, built a grove to worship Baal. The Lord was displeased so he sent Elijah to Ahab with a short message. "You haven't paid your water bill. Your water is going to be shut off." That's right. No dew nor rain. You can just imagine how Ahab felt about that. He wasn't the least bit happy. Elijah could see that it might not be healthy if he stayed for dinner so he strategically withdrew. He fled east to the brook Cherith to hide. He had

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water to drink, and the ravens fed him bread and flesh night and morning. That worked well for a while but without rain the brook went dry. Now that created a problem for Elijah, but the Lord was right on top of the problem. The Lord told Elijah,

Arise, get thee to Zarepath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

So he arose and went to Zarepath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks; and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. (I Kings 17:9-12)

That's what she said but what was she thinking? You can just imagine. "Is this the fellow I'm supposed to sustain? He might be an imposter or just a beggar. Why did the Lord wait so long? There's only one meal left. How can I sustain him with only one meal?"

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The BARREL OF MEAL SHALL NOT WASTE, neither shall THE CRUSE OF OIL FAIL, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. (I Kings 17:13-14)

At this point you can just imagine her thinking, "I believe he is the one."

And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.

And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah. (I Kings 17:15-16)

The demonstration of faith by the widow of Zarepath is unique. You see, she was not of the House of Israel. She was a gentile. Yet she had more faith than the Israelites. The Savior chided the unbelievers of Nazareth by reminding them of the Woman of Zarepath.

And he said, Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.

But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias (Elijah), when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land;

But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, (Zarepath) a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. (Luke 4:24-26)

He also reminded them of the fact that Israel was full of lepers, but Naaman the Syrian (another gentile) was the one that was healed. The people of Nazareth were filled with wrath. They cast him out of the synagogue, took him to the brow of a hill and were going to cast him down, headlong. Perhaps this should serve as a solemn warning to those of us who are of the "chosen," or "adopted" seed. If the gentiles can share by faith and be healed by faith, what about the Latter-day saints?

THE LORD'S PROMISES

Now that we have examined several instances in the Bible that demonstrated unselfishness and the ability to share, let us now turn to the promises that the Lord has given to the unselfish. As we examine the promises let us also examine our own faith in the Lord. In other words, do we believe the promises? Will they work for us? Are they based on principle or happenstance?

To examine the principle of giving and its rewards, perhaps nothing demonstrates it better than farming. Within the past year we have read of the terrible drought conditions of Central Africa. The lack of rain has caused a great famine. People are in desperate need. Hunger, starvation and death stalk the plains. It has been reported that things are so bad that people have eaten the seed that was to be planted the next year. Every farmer knows that the one thing you cannot eat is the seed for the next season. In the seed lies their faith and hope in the future. If the seed is eaten the possibility of having any kind of a future at all is greatly diminished.

What does the farmer do with the seed? He doesn't eat it. He gives it away to the right soil. He plants it as a sacrifice. Does he expect to be rewarded for the sacrifice? Yes, abundantly. If he didn't look forward to the abundant harvest he would not plant it in the first place. He believes there will be an abundant return. For a kernel of wheat he can expect forty to sixty kernels in return. For a kernel of corn he will expect two hundred to six hundred kernels in return.

Should I expect a return for giving, sharing, imparting of my substance and sacrificing? That is like asking if the farmer should plant without expecting a harvest. Of course, we should expect a return--an abundant return that will meet all our needs. The expectation of the return is the manifestation of our faith--the belief that we are literally the children of God and that He cares for each one of us. Listen to Paul the Apostle:

But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth BOUNTIFULLY SHALL REAP ALSO BOUNTIFULLY. (II Cor 9:6)

That takes care of the obedience part. The attitude is covered in the next verse.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, SO LET HIM GIVE: NOT GRUDGINGLY, OR OF NECESSITY: (out of duty) for God loveth a CHEERFUL GIVER.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and MULTIPLY YOUR SEED SOWN, and increase the fruits of your righteousness :)

Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which CAUSETH THROUGH US THANKSGIVING TO GOD. (II Cor 9:7-11)

Paul makes it very clear. We render obedience by giving. Our attitude is one of **THANKSGIVING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE**. It is not, "I wish I didn't have to give. I worked so hard to earn it. I need it more than the Lord anyway."

In the October General Conference 1974, Henry D. Taylor tells of President Marion G. Romney's challenging statement. "If we will **DOUBLE OUR FAST OFFERINGS** we shall **INCREASE OUR PROSPERITY** both **SPIRITUALLY** and **TEMPORALLY**." (Nov 1974 Ensign p. 14) That is the promise from a servant of the Lord. Do we believe it? If we do, we will double our fast offerings and look forward eagerly to the spiritual and temporal increase. It may not come immediately, but it will come if we believe that it will. Let us do as Paul suggests:

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in the due season we shall REAP, if we faint not. (Gal 6:9)

Don't get discouraged and quit. It takes several months for corn and wheat to give their increase. The Lord might be a little slow, according to our schedule, but He won't be late if we put our trust in Him and keep **PLANTING** or **GIVING**.

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Perhaps no one ever issued a stronger challenge than Malachi.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In TITHES and OFFERINGS. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and PROVE ME now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Mal 3:8-10)

How important is the payment of tithing?

It is contrary to the will and commandment of God that those receive not their inheritance by consecration, agreeable to his law which he has given, that he may TITHE his people, to prepare against the day of vengeance and burning, should have their names enrolled with the people of God. (D&C 85:3)

Giving, sharing, imparting of our substance is a demonstration of our faith. This means that we are trusting in God for our support. We are looking toward Him to provide the harvest. The anticipation is a joyous experience, but there is one factor that we must not overlook. For a gift to be fully acceptable to the Lord we must be in harmony with our fellow men.

Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, or if thou bring THY GIFT to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, Leave thou THY GIFT before the altar, and go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and THEN COME AND OFFER THY GIFT. (Matt 5:25-26 Insp Vers)

Perhaps there is one other kind of giving that we should mention--BEING FORCED to give. When this kind of giving takes place, if we are not careful the devil can get inside of us and fill us with rage because of the injustice of the situation. Concerning this kind of giving the Master said:

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, LET HIM HAVE IT: and if he sue thee again, LET HIM HAVE THY CLOAK ALSO. (Matt 5:42 Insp Vers)

Why does a "saint" act in this manner? Because it demonstrates that he has his eye on the Master. He has his full and complete trust in God. He is not trusting in his own arm of flesh, but in the arm of the Lord. The Lord is his strength and support. What is taken by force can be restored a hundred fold. He knows that. He believes that. He looks forward to the miracle that will bring it about. And what about the "saint" that brings suit against his fellow saint. Is he trusting in God or the arm of flesh? The answer to that is obvious. Oh, how the heavens must weep over our lack of faith today. Perhaps Luke 6:38 should be committed to memory.

GIVE, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, SHALL MEN GIVE INTO YOUR BOSOM. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

PROSPERITY -- THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

Prosperity is a two-edged sword. It can be a great blessing -- or a damnable cursing. If pride, vanity and unbelief come into the picture, it will be a cursing. If humility, thanksgiving, obedience, proper attitudes and pure motives can be maintained, prosperity can be a blessing. To the possessors of this land the promise has always been:

Inasmuch as ye shall keep my commandments ye shall prosper in the land; but inasmuch as ye will not keep my commandments ye shall be cut off from my presence. (11 Nephi 1:20)

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Let's go back to the Book of Mormon and the 49th year of the reign of the Judges and listen to one of the saddest commentaries ever given. We'll move from the 49th year to the 61st year, a period of just twelve years.

And it came to pass that in this same year there was exceeding great PROSPERITY IN THE CHURCH, insomuch that there were THOUSANDS who did join themselves unto the church and were baptized unto repentance. And so great was the prosperity of the church, and so many the blessings which were poured out upon the people, that even the HIGH PRIESTS and the TEACHERS were themselves ASTONISHED BEYOND MEASURE.

And it came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting to the church of God, many souls, yea, even TENS OF THOUSANDS. (Hel 3:24-26)

Just two years later, pride and vanity began to enter into those who professed to belong to the church of God, and by the 61st year -- just ten more years, they were engulfed in WAR. That sounds familiar, doesn't it? Listen to the "WHY" commentary.

Now this great loss of the Nephites, and the great slaughter which was among them, WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED had it not been for their wickedness and their abomination which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who PROFESSED TO BELONG TO THE CHURCH OF GOD.

And it was because of the PRIDE of their hearts, because of the exceeding RICHES, yea, it was because of their OPPRESSION TO THE POOR, WITHHOLDING their FOOD FROM THE HUNGRY, WITHHOLDING their CLOTHING FROM THE NAKED, and SMITING their HUMBLE BRETHREN upon the cheek, making a MOCK of that WHICH WAS SACRED, DENYING THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, and of REVELATION, MURDERING, PLUNDERING, LYING, STEALING, COMMITTING ADULTERY, rising up in great CONTENTIONS, and DESERTING AWAY into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites.

And because of this their great WICKEDNESS, and their BOASTINGS in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore THEY DID NOT PROSPER, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they had LOST POSSESSION of almost all their lands. (Hel 4:11-13)

Was the above commentary in the days of Helaman? It reads much like the newspaper reports of our last twenty years. The only difference is that the names and places have been changed. Something to ponder, isn't it?

CHAPTER 8

CLEAN

"And NO UNCLEAN THING can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of ALL THEIR SINS, and their faithfulness unto the end. (III Nephi 27:19)

In the church we have placed a great deal of emphasis on the law of chastity. Virtue has been cried both long and loud. The necessity of this emphasis is very easy to justify. However, in the minds of the youth and some adults it appears that Satan has come forth with a very clever deception. What is that deception? Being "unclean" has been equated only to the violation of the law of chastity. Is the violation of the law of chastity the only transgression that makes a person unclean? Of course not. Every sin or transgression that we commit makes us unclean. Yes, I mean every sin --lying, cheating, stealing, priestcraft, witchcraft, backbiting and the hundreds of other sins that we commit, all make us unclean. Some of the lesser sins may not carry the stigma that the violation of the law of chastity does, but lesser sins lead to greater sins.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CLEAN?

First of all, let's discuss what it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean to live the law of chastity alone. You mean that a person can be morally clean and still be unclean? That is exactly what I mean. You see, it takes more than moral cleanliness to qualify for entrance into the Celestial Kingdom. Listen to the Master:

I Am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

*Now **ye are CLEAN through the WORD WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU.** (John 15:1-3)*

What was the word that was spoken to the apostles that made them clean? In these verses John doesn't tell us what the "word ... spoken" is, but there are many other accounts to which we can refer, that we may know of a surety.

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him . . . And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

*And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him **WEeping**, and began to wash his feet with **TEARS**, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake **WITHIN HIMSELF, SAYING, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him ; FOR SHE IS A SINNER.** (Luke 7:36-39)*

Do you see what was happening? A woman heavily burdened by her past, weeping -- in the spirit of true repentance, was bathing the Master's feet with her tears seeking relief from her agonizing guilt and self-condemnation. The Master's attention was focused on the woman. He felt a divine compassion for her. He knew that He was shortly to be lifted up on the cross to die for her sins. He sensed the presence of the evil one. Satan had whispered to Simon, "If he were a prophet - he'd know what manner of woman this is - she's a sinner."

*And Jesus answering said unto him , **Simon, I have something to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.***

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty.

Clean

And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him . . . Thou has rightly judged.

And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

*Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, WHICH ARE MANY, ARE FORGIVEN; for she loved me much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. **And he said unto her, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN.***

And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

And he said to the woman, THY FAITH HATH SAVED THEE; go in peace. (Luke 7:40-50)

What are the sacred words that make a person clean? THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN. They are the words that every Latter-Day Saint should long to hear. They were the words with which the Lord consoled the repentant woman. They were the words that Simon probably didn't even know were available. Was it because of a seared conscience or a self-righteous attitude that Simon was not forgiven? Perhaps it was a combination of both.

What does it mean to be clean? This doctrine is so important that the Lord has defined it himself so we may have no cause for error. The Lord revealed the definition of "clean". To discover it let us go to the Kirtland Temple. The year is 1836. It is April the third. The prophet Joseph has just assisted in the distribution of the Lord's Supper. The meeting ends. The prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery approach the pulpit, kneel, and pour out their hearts to the Lord in solemn and silent prayer. As we watch we begin to sense a feeling of anticipation. Are those prayers going to be answered? Yes, right now. They cease their prayers, but they don't move. They are looking toward the pulpit. Their eyes are fixed on a heavenly being. Listen to Joseph's description:

The veil was taken from our minds, and the EYES OF OUR UNDERSTANDING WERE OPENED.

We saw the LORD standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit, before us; and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold, in color like amber.

His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters . . . (D&C 110:1-3)

As we ponder the scene with Joseph and Oliver we are filled with joy. Faith and hope course through our whole bodies as we gaze upon the Master. Look, we can even see the nail marks in His hands and feet. We wonder if we should be there. Our sins pass before our eyes like tired soldiers. The Savior senses our concern. Look -- He's smiling. He's speaking,

even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the first and the last: I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father. Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are CLEAN BEFORE ME; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice. (D&C 110:4-5)

How does a person become clean?

Now ye are CLEAN through the WORD WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU. (John 15:3)

And what are the words?

Behold, YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU: you are CLEAN BEFORE ME; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice. (D&C 110:5)

Listen as Enos describes this experience in his life.

Behold, it came to pass that I, Enos, knowing my father that he was a just man -- for he taught me in his language, and also in the nurture and admonition of the Lord -- and blessed be the name of my God for it -- And I will tell you of the WRESTLE which I had before I RECEIVED A REMISSION OF MY SINS.

Behold, I went to hunt beasts in the forests; (Enos 1-3)

Now, isn't that interesting. Enos decided to go hunting, but the Lord had this day set apart for something besides hunting. The Lord changed Enos' interest from hunting back to the teachings of his father.

And the words which I had often heard my father speak concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart.

And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; AND ALL THE DAY LONG DID I CRY UNTO HIM: yea, and when the night came I DID STILL RAISE MY VOICE HIGH THAT IT REACHED THE HEAVENS.

*And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, **THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE**, and thou shalt be blessed.*

And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, MY GUILT WAS SWEEPED AWAY.

And I said, Lord, how is it done?

*And he said unto me: Because of thy FAITH IN CHRIST, whom thou hast never before heard nor seen. And many years pass away before he shall manifest himself in the flesh; wherefore, go to, **THY FAITH HATH MADE THEE WHOLE.** (Enos 3-8)*

The example of Enos is one of the great examples in holy writ. The nature of Enos' transgressions are not known, but what is clearly evident is the determination that Enos had. How many of us have prayed all day and then into the night? That is what Enos did. He was determined to see it through to its conclusion. He believed that the Lord had the power to forgive and that he could obtain that forgiveness.

Another thing might be said of Enos. He admits that he had a guilt complex, for he says that his guilt was swept away. It has been suggested that a guilt complex is some kind of unnatural aberration of the mind; that it is something that is unhealthy. Nothing could be farther from the truth. A guilt complex is the result of an awakened conscience. It is the gentle nudging of the Spirit toward the process of repentance. If we don't have a guilt complex it is either because we are still too young or have been forgiven or because our conscience has been seared with a hot iron. Pray that it may not be the latter. If we have not experienced what Enos did, perhaps a guilt complex would be something worthwhile to add to our prayer requests.

FORGIVENESS FOR THE SUBJECTS OF KING BENJAMIN

One of the great accounts of forgiveness happened in the days of King Benjamin. It was just three years prior to his death. He had been a good king. He had labored with his own hands for his support. His subjects had been diligent in keeping the commandments of the Lord. (Mosiah 1:11) King Benjamin ordered that a tower be built near the temple in the land of Zarahemla that the people might gather to hear his words. King Benjamin prepared himself well for this last sermon.~ He wanted it to be his best. So great in fact was his preparation that the Lord sent an angel to him and gave him the sermon that he should deliver to his people. The deep humility of this great man was going to be felt by this whole congregation. The message that King Benjamin gave to those people centered around the atonement of Christ and remission of sins. (Mosiah 3:13) How did it affect the congregation? Listen.

And now, it came to pass that when king Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord had come upon them.

And they had viewed them selves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud WITH ONE VOICE, SAYING:

O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ THAT WE MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS, and our hearts may be purified; for we BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men.

And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the SPIRIT OF THE LORD CAME UPON THEM, and they were filled with joy, HAVING RECEIVED A REMISSION OF THEIR SINS, and having peace of conscience, BECAUSE OF THE EXCEEDING FAITH WHICH THEY HAD IN JESUS CHRIST who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them. (Mosiah 4:1-3)

In three of the above accounts did you notice the factor that was always present? That factor was faith in Christ. To the sinner in Simon's home the Lord said, "thy faith hath saved thee." To Enos, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." And to the subjects of King Benjamin it was "because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come." Do we really believe in the atonement of Christ? Do we believe that He will forgive us? Unless we do we will never attempt the process of repentance. **Faith and repentance are the foundation of forgiveness.**

CHAPTER 9

MIGHTY PRAYER

"Nevertheless the children of God were commanded that they should gather themselves together OFT, and join in FASTING AND MIGHTY PRAYER in behalf of the welfare of the souls of those WHO KNEW NOT GOD." (Alma 6:6)

Approximately fifteen years after the magnificent address of King Benjamin a very perplexing problem arose in the church. A spirit of apostasy began to enter into the youth of the church. Mosiah was the king. Alma was the prophet. Listen to its description:

Now it came to pass that there were many of the rising generation that could not understand the words of king Benjamin, being little children at the time he spake unto his people; and they did not believe the tradition of their fathers.

They did not believe what had been said concerning the resurrection of the dead, neither did they believe concerning the coming of Christ.

And now because of their UNBELIEF they could not understand the word of God; and their hearts were hardened.

And they would not be baptized; neither would they join the church. And they were a separate people as to their faith, and remained so ever after, even in their carnal and sinful state; for they would not call upon the Lord their God. (Mosiah 26:1-4)

The interesting thing is that part of that rising, rebellious generation were sons of very important people. One of them was Alma, the son of the Prophet, Alma. Four of them were Ammon, Aaron, Omner and Himni. They just happened to be the sons of King Mosiah. You can imagine the embarrassment the prophet and king felt because of the conduct of their sons. People were complaining to Alma and King Mosiah about the situation. Obviously something had to be done. A proclamation was issued making it illegal to persecute the saints of God. Now these young men weren't too interested in honoring, obeying and sustaining the laws of the land. They just went underground and continued persecuting the church in secret. Passing a law didn't do one bit of good. It didn't change the hearts of these young men at all. It didn't take the prophet and the king long to discover that this approach was of little value. It just didn't work. There must be another approach to this problem. Let's pick up the story now and see if we can discover what the other approach was. If there is a workable plan that can be used successfully it should be shouted from the house tops because there are many thousands in the Kingdom today that are faced with identically the same problem that Alma and King Mosiah had in their day.

And as I said unto you, as they were going about rebelling against God, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto them; and he descended as it were in a cloud; and he spake as it were with a voice of thunder, which caused the earth to shake upon which they stood;

And so great was their astonishment, that they fell to the earth, and understood not the words which he spake unto them.

Nevertheless he cried again, saying: Alma, arise and stand forth, for why persecutest thou the church of God? For the Lord hath said: "This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, SAVE IT IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF MY PEOPLE."

And again, the angel said:

Behold, the Lord hath heard the PRAYERS OF HIS PEOPLE, and also the PRAYERS OF HIS SERVANT, ALMA, who is thy father; for he has PRAYED WITH MUCH FAITH CONCERNING THEE that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the PRAYERS OF HIS SERVANTS MIGHT BE ANSWERED ACCORDING TO THEIR FAITH. (Mosiah 27:11-14)

Mighty Prayer

All of this was too much for Alma. He was struck dumb so that he could not speak or move. In this helpless condition he was carried and laid helpless before his father. After hearing of the experience with the angel, Alma, the father, began to rejoice. His faith had been vindicated. His prayers were answered. How long had he prayed for this wayward son? How many special fasts had he participated in that his son might be brought to repentance? The scripture is silent on this subject but it appears that it went on for several years -- yes, several years. That should give us confidence. Surely anyone can pay the price in that length of time if we are burdened with a similar problem. Now let's continue with the story. Alma was lying there in a helpless state. Alma, the elder, invited the priests and a multitude that they might witness the coming event. He invited them all to participate in a special two day fast.

And it came to pass after they had fasted and prayed for the space of two days and two nights, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort:

For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters. (Mosiah 27.23-25)

Do you see the significance of what has just taken place? A father, the priests and the people have demonstrated their concern so much for these five young men that they pray with such great faith, probably for years, that the Lord finally answered their prayers by sending an angel to the young men. The angel spoke plainly so that they could not mistake the message. They were brought to the crossroads, by the faith and prayers of those who loved them. They had to make a decision. The responsibility of free agency weighed heavily upon them. The choice was now theirs. But what had brought them to this point? It was the faith, fasting and prayers that had been exercised by Alma the prophet, by King Mosiah, by the priests, and by the rest of the people that had participated in the two day fast. The five boys made the right decision after they were brought to the crossroads. They repaired the damage, as well as they could, and became five of the greatest missionaries in Book of Mormon history.

When we finally discover this principle and the faith that propels it, a spiritual regeneration will begin to sweep the church as a flood. Thousands will be reclaimed through this process. Miracles that took place in the days of Alma will once again be commonplace in the church -- if we are willing to pay the price. Fasting, faith and prayer is the key, along with the instructions that the Lord will give in each individual case. Is this not the way in which we will become "clean" from the blood and sins of this generation?

There is no question but what some can be brought to the crossroads, use their free agency, and go the wrong direction. But others will choose to return to the fold of Christ like the sons of Mosiah and Alma the younger. Even if some go the wrong direction does this lessen our responsibility to "pray and fast" them to the crossroads? If the one who returns to the fold happens to be your son or daughter it will be well worth the price -- won't it?

Before concluding I want to focus for a moment on the following verses from Moroni 2 which indicate yet another vital application of "mighty prayer"

Moroni 2:1-3 The words of Christ, which he spake unto his disciples, the twelve whom he had chosen, as he laid his hands upon them -

*2 And he called them by name saying: Ye shall call on the Father in my name, **IN MIGHTY PRAYER**: and after ye have done this ye shall have power that to him upon whom ye shall lay your hands, **ye shall give the Holy Ghost**; and in my name shall ye give it, for thus do mine apostles.*

3 Now Christ spake these words unto them at the time of his first appearing; and the multitude heard it not, but the disciples heard it; and on as many as they laid their hands fell the Holy Ghost.

The account of the occasion on which this instruction was given is found at 3 Nep 18:37. See also 19:19-23. Perhaps those who confirm individuals members of the Church would do well to consider more seriously the above instruction of the Savior to the twelve during his visit to them after his resurrection concerning giving the Holy Ghost.

Another interesting verse on the subject of giving the Holy Ghost is found in Section 55 to William W. Phelps.

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 Ghost.**

ATONEMENT OF CHRIST

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. Matt 26:27-28

CHAPTER 10

REMISSION OF SINS (PLURAL)

"And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE, and thou shalt be blessed." (Enos 5)

In a previous chapter we have discussed the doctrine of becoming clean. We discovered that it pertains to the forgiveness of our sins. There are six major doctrines that point in the same direction -- to a remission of sins. Let's put it in chart form.

FAITH IN THE LORD

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive REMISSION OF SINS. Acts 10:43

REPENTANCE

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every-one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the REMISSION OF SINS, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:38

KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS

And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; AND THE FULFILLING THE COMMANDMENTS BRING-ETH REMISSION OF SINS.

Moroni 8:25

BAPTISM BY WATER

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the REMISSION OF SINS...

D&C 13

REMISSION OF SINS

BAPTISM BY FIRE

And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that he have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptised, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a REMISSION OF THEIR SINS. III Nephi 12:2

All of the above doctrines pertain to a remission of sins. Perhaps a remission of sins is more important than we might have thought. This leads us to one of the most important questions that can ever be asked. the How does Lord forgive sins? Does He forgive them one at a time? Or does He forgive them all at once? The answer may surprise you. It has been suggested that inasmuch as we sin one sin at a time perhaps that is the way that we should repent of them. In fact, that is the very approach that I took while in Korea. The war was over and I had a lot of time on my hands. I thought that a program of self-repentance would be just the bill. I'd probably have more time while in Korea than any other time in my life. So I analyzed my weaknesses, put the worst one at the top of the list, jumped on my white charger and rode off in a blaze of glory, knowing that perfection was just around the corner. Well, you can guess what happened. Nothing -- absolutely nothing. Several weeks went by and I was beginning to get discouraged because I wasn't able to conquer the first sin on the list and would you believe that I never ever got to the second sin. When I left Korea 13 months later I was still working on the first -- and not getting anywhere. Maybe I'm just weak. Surely you've never had any experience like that, have you?

On another occasion I heard a president of an Elder's Quorum testify that he had been using the above plan of repentance for ten long years and that he was not one bit better a person than when he started the program ten years ago. After my experience in Korea, I knew what he was talking about. Two of us in the church are weaklings. If there are two weaklings in the church who can't seem to repent of sins one at a time, maybe there are more. Maybe you are one of them. Be honest now. If you aren't honest, you're going to the Telestial Kingdom anyway.

Now for you folks that have been successful in repenting of sins one at a time, don't let me discourage you. Some people just have more backbone than others. If you are one of them, more power to you. However, be sure that you don't pick up two bad habits for every one you conquer.

It has been my experience that repenting of sins one at a time is very difficult. But you say, "If that method doesn't work, is there a method that will work?" Yes, there is a better method -- why not repent of your sins all at once, yes, all at once? You may as well do it the easy way. Let us assume you are a criminal and have robbed a dozen banks. Suddenly you find yourself face to face with the judge and he says to you, "Son, I'm the judge. I have power to punish you or pardon you. You can have it whichever way you want it. First of all I want you to admit everything you have done is wrong, and second, I want a promise that you will never repeat your crime. "You say that all that I have to do is confess to you my crimes and promise that I will never do them again, and you will permit me to walk out of here a free man?" And the judge answers, "That is exactly right. If you will confess every crime that you have committed and if you really mean it when you promise to go straight, I'll let you off this time but if I ever find you in my court again I'll exact full payment." Not quite believing, you say, "Judge, you have a deal." Now, can you imagine anyone turning down a proposal like that? Well, thousands or even millions of people are turning it down every day. One of the reasons is that they just don't understand. Don't you see? The judge in the story is the Master. Does He not have the power to punish or pardon? And who is the criminal? That is you and me. Maybe we had better get to confession before it's too late. Why do we always have to hide our sins? Surely the Lord knows what our sins are. Why does He demand that admission of guilt? I don't know, but one thing that I do know, is that He does. It is the beginning of repentance and it is so simple. Perhaps that is why most of us have overlooked it. What do you think Enos was doing in that all day prayer? He was confessing his sins to the Lord. The whole tenor of the Book of Mormon bears that out. What did the Lord say to the Prophet Joseph Smith?

Nevertheless, he has sinned; but verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, forgive sins unto those who CONFESS THEIR SINS before ME and ask forgiveness, who have not sinned unto death. (D&C 64:7)

Now you'll notice that you confess all of your sins, not just a few of them. Aren't you seeking a total forgiveness? Why, of course. So you take all of your sins, put them in a sack. It might be large or small. You go before the Lord in mighty prayer. You open up the sack, take out the sins one at a time and lay them before the Lord in specific confession and tell the Lord exactly what you had to do with each sin. When you have confessed every sin to the Lord then you put them back in the sack, tie it shut, hand it to the Lord and humbly ask His pardon or forgiveness. Now what is the Lord's attitude? He is eager to forgive you. He has been waiting for you to come to this point so that He could. That is why He suffered on the cross, so that you could be forgiven. Do you think that He wants His atonement to be valueless in your life? Of course not. He wants to forgive you. That will bring you under the umbrella of the atonement. That means that He didn't die in vain. He is waiting, waiting. Don't make Him wait too long. If this seems to be over-simplification don't let it worry you. Just get started. Then wait for the other facets of repentance to be filled in by the Lord in their proper order and sequence. When the Lord fills in the blanks it's done at the proper time and place for all concerned. Get excited, brothers and sisters. Revive the gift of the Holy Ghost within you and give Him cause to go to work in your behalf.

WHEN THE LORD OPENS THE BAG

We have just discussed personal confession where we initiate the action. Sometimes the Lord initiates the action in answer to prayer. We talked about that in Alma's situation. In Alma's case the Lord opened the bag of sins and laid them before him. Sometimes confession of sins is by revelation, sometimes you do it, and sometimes it is a combination of both. Listen to Alma describe how it happened to him:

Now, behold, I say unto you, if I had not been born of God I should not have known these things; but God has, by the mouth of his holy angel, made these things known unto me, not of any worthiness of myself. For I went about with the sons of Mosiah, seeking to destroy the church of God; but behold, God sent his holy angel to stop us by the way. And behold, he spake unto us, as it were the voice of thunder, and the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet; and we all fell to the earth, for the fear of the Lord came upon us. (Alma 36:5-7)

But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree and RACKED WITH ALL MY SINS.

YEA, I DID REMEMBER ALL MY SINS AND INIQUITIES, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments. (Alma 36:12-13)

And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.

And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the MEMORY OF MY MANY SINS, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart:

O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more." (Alma 36:16-19)

There it is. Do you believe it? The Lord, through a process of revelation, revealed Alma's sins to him while he lay helpless. He may not have been able to move, but his mind was clear. Did you notice that prayer that he offered? It consisted of one sentence, but after three days of suffering I want to tell you that he meant every word. And how did the Lord respond?

And it came to pass that I was three days and three nights in the most bitter pain and anguish of soul; and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I RECEIVE A REMISSION OF MY SINS. But behold, I did find peace to my soul. (Alma 38:8)

In this case of repentance it seems that about all that Alma supplied was the suffering. The Lord supplied the confession by revelation and granted forgiveness. His father and others supplied faith in the Lord, the fasting and prayer. Are you beginning to get the picture? Why repent of sins one at a time when you can repent of them all at once?

In addition to the six important factors affecting receiving a remission of sins discussed in this chapter, another essential factor, perhaps even the most factor, is discussed in chapter 20.

CHAPTER 11

THE LORD'S PART IN REPENTANCE

"And now behold, I ask of you, my BRETHREN OF THE CHURCH, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change IN YOUR HEARTS." (Alma 5:14)

The first suggestion that I wish to make is that there are two parts to repentance. The part that you do and the part that the Lord does. What do you do? You keep the commandments to the best of your ability, and when your conscience finally awakens from slumber you confess your sins to the Lord and to anyone else that the Lord may instruct, oft times accompanied by intense fasting and prayer. That's what you do. Now, what does the Lord do? He forgives you in a revelation DIRECTLY to you. This was demonstrated in the case of Enos, Alma and all of the subjects of King Benjamin. Perhaps you are still puzzled, but you won't be when you experience what I'm talking about. Now you may ask, "HOW DO I CHANGE? You see I have some bad habits. They have been plaguing my conscience. How do I actually make the change?" That's the question that really needs to be answered.

That brings us to one of the most important aspects of repentance, the part the Lord does. "And just what does the Lord do?" you ask. HE CHANGES YOU BY GIFT. That is exactly the way it happens. And what effort do you put in at this point? Accept the gift, and praise the Lord evermore. Didn't that sound simple? It is. The Lord has reduced everything to simplicity. It is Satan who throws in the complexities. Let's turn to some of the previous accounts and see if we can turn your unbelief to BELIEF. Let's start with Alma. Do you remember? He was in a horizontal position. His father Alma, the priest, and congregation had been fasting and praying for him. He couldn't move his limbs. The Lord showed him an instant replay of his sins. After three days he suddenly stood up, bid them to be of good comfort, and delivered a sermon to his father, Alma, the prophet, and the rest of those assembled. The most interesting thing about his sermon is that it is now scripture and binding upon us.

For, said he, I have repented of my sins, (He repented while lying flat on his back, unable to move, and the Lord changed him) and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.

*And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, MEN and WOMEN, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, CHANGED from their carnal and fallen state, TO A STATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters. And **THUS THEY BECOME NEW CREATURES:** and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.*

I say unto you, unless this be the case, they must be cast off; and this I know, because I was like to be cast off.

Nevertheless, after wandering through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the LORD IN MERCY HATH SEEN FIT TO SNATCH ME OUT OF AN EVERLASTING BURNING, and I am born of God.

My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; BUT I AM SNATCHED, and my soul is pained no more. (Mosiah 27:24-29)

Now let's return to the sermon of King Benjamin. He finished delivering the sermon that the angel had given him and the congregation was treated to an instant replay of their sins. It was the same thing that we just discussed about Alma. Listen to the description.

And they had viewed them selves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying:

O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified; for we believe in Jesus Christ, the son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things; who shall come down among the children of men. And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which King Benjamin had spoken unto them. (Mosiah 4:2-3)

King Benjamin didn't realize what had happened to the congregation.

And now, it came to pass that when King Benjamin had thus spoken to his people, he sent among them, desiring to know of his people IF THEY BELIEVED THE WORDS WHICH HE HAD SPOKEN TO THEM.

And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we BELIEVE all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, WHICH HAS WROUGHT A MIGHTY CHANGE IN US, or in our HEARTS, that we have NO MORE DISPOSITION TO DO EVIL, but to DO GOOD CONTINUALLY. (Mosiah 5:1-2)

There it is. Do you believe it? The Lord changed them. The Lord changed their hearts. No longer did they desire to do evil. Their only desire was to do good continually. Now if you think that you can accomplish that mighty change in your hearts -- go to it, but you'll never make it. That is the part that the Lord does. However, there is something that you must do. It has already been suggested. Keep the commandments. Confess your sins to the Lord and learn how to fast and pray properly. That's the part that you do.

Perhaps the story of Keith will illustrate the part that the Lord plays in repentance. Keith and I had been friends for a number of years. One day I found him knocking at my door. I was a little puzzled because our association was mainly on a Sunday basis. It was obvious that Keith had something on his mind. A two hour gospel discussion ensued. It was clear that Keith's conscience was being awakened. He was beginning to remember his transgressions and the Lord was giving him the same kind of guilt complex that Enos had experienced. A guilt complex is how the Lord needles us into repentance. The discussion centered around fasting and prayer and of what repentance really consists -- CONFESSION OF SINS. It was difficult to determine how Keith was accepting the doctrine, but one thing was perfectly clear. He was intensely interested, although when he left, I felt that he was still somewhat skeptical. Perhaps I was wrong, because, he set himself on a program of fasting and prayer once a week along with a monthly two-day fast. How do you like that for determination? Recently he visited our Seventies group and it happened to be my turn to direct the discussion. You can guess to what subject it was directed. I said, "Keith, what were you talking to the Lord about in all that fasting and praying?" "Confessing my sins," he humbly answered. "Week after week?" I asked. "Yes," he responded. "Why were you doing it so often?" I asked. "I was seeking the Lord's forgiveness. I wanted to get rid of my nagging guilt complex." "Was your confession to the Lord general or specific?" I asked. "They were specific. What I had to do was lay each sin out before the Lord, describe the part that I played, admit my guilt and ask Him to forgive me," he answered. "Did you confess all of your sins to the Lord?" I asked. "Well, there was a slight problem. You see, the Lord kept adding to the list by reminding me of those which I had forgotten." "In other words, your memory was awakened." "That's right," Keith replied. "And how long did this intense fasting continue," I inquired. "Six months!"

Was Keith rewarded for his effort? Let me testify that he was. I'll never forget the day when I met him and we were about to enter the church. It was a bright summer day as the sun reflected off the light yellow brick of our chapel -- a day when the sun can cause you to squint. But Keith was not squinting. I looked into his eyes and the pupils were enormous. I knew instantly what was happening. He was in the very process of being "born of the Spirit." He was a modern day Enos. The power of the Holy Ghost was upon him and every word that came from his lips was pure revelation. I envied him. He gave me a loving chastisement as we

The Lord's Part In Repentance

entered the chapel. Had Keith reached his goal? Had the Lord forgiven him? Without a doubt. Keith was no longer the same individual. Before this very day, and I'm sure that he will testify of this, he was vain, proud, cocky and arrogant. He'll smile when he reads this, but he knows that it is true. After the two day "baptism of fire" he was a completely different man. That pride, arrogance and vanity were gone. The Lord had taken them out of his character, by gift, by virtue of his sincere repentance, and replaced them with humility, kindness and love for his fellow men. There was no doubt about it. Keith was a new creature, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and no small stir was created in the ward because practically everyone noticed the change. The spirit confirmed that he had been born again. He had been CHANGED BY THE LORD from his fallen state to a state of righteousness and given a very special gift, the gift of LOVE. Just like Enos, he now carried with him this great desire for the "welfare of his brethren." (Enos 9)

THE APPLICATION

Let's not get any false notions from the above. Remember that we are talking about the Lord's part in repentance. You may have worked on your personality and your character in a sincere attempt to improve both and you may be able to testify to a measure of success, but the MIGHTY CHANGE is the Lord's department. Let us consider the Lord's instructions to Oliver Cowdery.

Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.

Therefore, THIS IS THY GIFT: APPLY UNTO IT, and blessed art thou, for it shall deliver you out of the hands of your enemies, when, if it were not so, they would slay you and bring your soul to destruction. (D&C 8:2-4)

The Lord gave Oliver the spirit of revelation by gift, but Oliver was reminded of his part in using the gift. He had to make application for it. And how did he do that? The same way that we make application for the MIGHTY CHANGE. At the risk of too much repetition -
we FAST and PRAY,
we KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS, and
we CONFESS OUR SINS TO THE LORD

HAVE YOU PUT IN YOUR APPLICATION?

CHAPTER 12

THE ATTENDANT MANIFESTATIONS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

"For these are they WHOSE SINS HE HAS BORNE ; these are they for whom he has died, to redeem them from their transgressions." (Mosiah 15:12)

How do you know that your repentance is acceptable to the Lord? This is perhaps one of the most important questions that a person can ever ask. I would like to suggest that if you don't know whether your repentance is acceptable to the Lord, it is because it isn't. What actually happens to a person when he truly repents? That is another very important question. In turning to the scriptures you will easily discover the many gifts that accompany true repentance.

Enos, in the process of praying all day and into the night testifies:

"And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, THY SINS ARE FORGIVEN THEE, and thou shalt be blessed. (Enos 5)

Isn't that interesting. The first thing that the Lord gave to Enos was the perfect knowledge that his sins were forgiven. He knew that his repentance was acceptable to the Lord. Was there anything else that happened to him?

And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; therefore MY GUILT WAS SWEEPED AWAY. (Enos 6)

Not only did the Lord forgive his sins but he took away the guilt complex.

There just happens to be a profession of people in the world that are trained to deal with the guilt complex. It seems to be at the root of many emotional problems. Even members of the church have been seduced by their false theories. There are two ways to deal with a guilt complex. The first one is the way that Enos handled his. He went to the Lord in mighty prayer and confession and the Lord took it away by gift. That's quite a price to pay, isn't it? Others would rather pay fifty dollars an hour and then end up with nothing but Satan's method. How does Satan get rid of a guilt complex? Perhaps this experience (and there are hundreds of thousands of these cases) will demonstrate.

One of my friends got involved in immoral behavior. The process went on for a number of years. Finally he sought professional help. His psychiatrist advised him that his moral code was too strict. He would have to lower his moral code in order to get rid of the guilt. He also suggested that his abnormal activities were not so abnormal after all, depending on your moral code.

I don't know whether this particular psychiatrist was a Latter-Day Saint or not. If he was he needed his head examined. If you have a guilt complex I strongly suggest that you talk to the Lord as Enos did and it won't cost you fifty dollars an hour. Satan's counsel is just a bit over-priced, don't you think?

What else did Enos experience?

Now, it came to pass that when I had heard these words I began to FEEL A DESIRE FOR THE WELFARE OF MY BRETHREN, the Nephites; wherefore, I DID POUR OUT MY WHOLE SOUL UNTO GOD FOR THEM. (Enos 9)

How do you like that? Enos has just finished praying all day and into the night and he is now consumed with a desire for the welfare of his brethren so he prays again. This time he prays for his brethren. How many people do you have on your prayer list?

After the Lord answered Enos' prayer for his brethren Enos then testified:

And after I, Enos, had heard these words, MY FAITH BEGAN TO BE UNSHAKEN IN THE LORD.... (Enos 11)

As the winding up scene gets closer and closer and Satan rears his ugly head more and more, how would you like to meet your problems with faith that was incapable of being shaken? Besides the REMISSION OF SINS, what other gifts and manifestations did Enos experience?

HIS GUILT WAS SWEEPED AWAY
HE FELT AN INTENSE DESIRE FOR THE WELFARE OF HIS BRETHREN
HIS FAITH BEGAN TO BE UNSHAKEN IN THE LORD

Inherent in the above was the capacity to receive personal revelation. Enos mentioned three attendant gifts. It is my conviction that he experienced many more that he did not include in his short writing. Perhaps you'll see why.

Let's move forward to the people of King Benjamin and see what they experienced in addition to the remission of sins.

After a portion of the sermon which the angel gave king Benjamin had been delivered) and after an instant replay of the people's sins had been shown) and after the one sentence prayer, it is recorded:

And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were FILLED WITH JOY, having received a remission of their sins, and having PEACE OF CONSCIENCE,.... (MOSIAH 4:3)

You see, their guilt was swept away also.

After King Benjamin's portion of the sermon he sent among them to see if they believed what he had spoken. This was their reply:

*And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, WE BELIEVE ALL the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also WE KNOW of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has WROUGHT A MIGHTY CHANGE in us, or in our hearts, that WE HAVE NO MORE DISPOSITION TO DO EVIL, but TO DO GOOD CONTINUALLY.
And we, ourselves, also, through the infinite goodness of God, and the manifestations of his Spirit, HAVE GREAT VIEWS OF THAT WHICH IS TO COME: and were it expedient we could PROPHECY of all things.
And it is the faith which we have had on the things which our king has spoken unto us that has brought us to this great KNOWLEDGE, whereby we DO REJOICE with exceeding great JOY.
(Mosiah 5:2-4)*

What were the attendant gifts when the Spirit of the Lord fell upon them?

JOY

PEACE OF CONSCIENCE

BELIEF IN THE SERMON

KNOWLEDGE OF ITS TRUTH THE MIGHTY CHANGE

NO MORE DISPOSITION TO DO EVIL, but TO DO GOOD CONTINUALLY

GREAT VIEWS OF THE FUTURE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY

Manifestations Of True Repentance

You'll notice that all of these gifts came as the result of the capacity to receive personal revelation through the manifestations of the Spirit. These are just a few more of the things that the Lord does when we properly repent. But there are more.

Listen as Mormon adds to the list:

And the first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith unto the fulfilling the commandments; and the fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins; And the remission of sins bringeth MEEKNESS, and LOWLINESS OF HEART; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with HOPE and PERFECT LOVE, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come) when all the saints shall dwell with God. (Moroni 8:25-26)

These short verses are two of the most penetrating in Holy Writ. In them Mormon adds to the attendant gift list. What are they?

MEEKNESS
LOWLINESS OF HEART
PERFECT LOVE
HOPE

Did you notice what preceded these gifts? Wasn't it repentance, baptism and keeping the commandments? Let's see if we can find any more to add to the list. Even these will not complete the list. Do you remember the gift that was given on the day of Pentecost?

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost) and began to speak with OTHER TONGUES, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:4)

To the above list add the gift of
TONGUES

There is one more that is in desperate need in the church today. It is one that we should covet earnestly. Listen to the Prophet Joseph's description.

...We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation. Our minds now being enlightened, WE BEGAN TO HAVE THE SCRIPTURES LAID OPEN TO OUR UNDERSTANDINGS, AND THE TRUE MEANING AND INTENTION of their more mysterious passages REVEALED to us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. (JS 2:73-74 PofGP)

The list of gifts which accompany repentance and remission of sins include the following:

GUILT SWEEP AWAY	NO MORE DISPOSITION TO DO EVIL
DESIRE FOR YOUR FELLOW MEN	TO DO GOOD CONTINUALLY
UNSHAKEN FAITH IN THE LORD	GREAT VIEW OF THE FUTURE (visions)
JOY	SPIRIT OF PROPHECY
PEACE OF CONSCIENCE	MEEKNESS
CAPACITY TO BELIEVE	LOWLINESS OF HEART
KNOWLEDGE (they knew)	HOPE
THE MIGHTY CHANGE	PERFECT LOVE
SCRIPTURES OPENED TO UNDERSTANDING	TONGUES

By now I'm sure that you know whether your repentance has been acceptable to the Lord or not. We have discovered eighteen gifts that attend a remission of sins. I am sure that Manifestations Of True Repentance

there are many more. I don't wish to imply that every person experiences all of these gifts. I know that they do not, but I do know of one individual that has experienced the initial gift -- remission of sins. In going down the list he said that he had experienced all of them but two, tongues and visions. That is sixteen of them that attended his repentance. I'm sure that you can anticipate the next question. **How many of these gifts have attended your repentance?**

CHAPTER 13

THE HATED PRINCIPLE -- FASTING

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, said unto my father: I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save HE SHALL PREPARE A WAY FOR THEM, that they may accomplish the thing which he commanded them." (1 Nephi 3:7)

Of all the principles that challenge the integrity of the saints, fasting is at the top of the list. You see, it is not a requirement for a temple recommend. No one checks up on you to see if you are doing it. Your free agency is completely unchallenged as to whether you obey the law or not. You can sit in fast and testimony meeting month after month and no one will ever ask you if you have completed an honest fast. In fact, no one seems to know what constitutes an honest fast.

In the previous section we discovered that fasting played an important role in bringing Alma to the crossroads. If it is so important, perhaps we should inquire into our own attitude toward this principle. As with any other commandment, a proper attitude is absolutely vital in fasting. If we complain or do it reluctantly, we cancel our effectiveness.

Why does Satan hate fasting? Because it strips him of his power over us. Not only does Satan hate fasting, he actually fears fasting. Yes, he is actually afraid of this principle. The tragic thing is that many saints hate fasting also. I mean that just the way I said it. Many of the saints hate fasting. Many believe they can't fast. One gets severe headaches. Another suffers stomach cramps. Spells of dizziness inflict another fast. The medical profession advises the next one not to. To another, Satan whispers, "You don't get much pleasure out of life, and food is the one thing that you really enjoy." Perhaps it is about time to explode some of these attitudes by asking a very important question. AM I TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD OR AM I TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO GET OUT OF KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS? Now we have the picture in focus, don't we?

Cliff, a good friend, paid a visit to my home one day. He was concerned about his health. He had colitis. Do you know why he was concerned? He couldn't fast. Now that's a switch, isn't it? I asked him simple question.

"Do you want to observe the law of the fast?"

"Yes," he answered.

I said, "Why don't you go before the Lord in mighty prayer and explain your situation to the Lord. Explain to him that you can't fast, but that you don't want to miss out on the blessings of fasting. Say to the Lord, 'I want to make a bargain with you. If you will heal my colitis, I will observe the law of the fast.'" Now a bargain is nothing more than a covenant. Do you think that the Lord would turn down a prayer like that? Several months later Cliff paid another visit to my home. We chatted for a while before he came to the point of his visit, saying, "Incidentally, the Lord healed my colitis. I'm now able to observe the law of the fast." I wasn't one bit surprised, were you? This true experience is the exception. Here's how it usually happens.

"Do you want to observe the law of the fast?" I say.

"Well, it's awfully hard."

"Listen, why don't you go before the Lord and say to him, 'If you'll heal me I promise to observe the fast the rest of my life.'"

He answers, "You don't seem to understand, I don't want to fast. I hate fasting. As long as I'm sick I don't have to fast. Besides, I like being sick."

If you are in this latter category, I suggest that you quit reading right now, because when you are through with this particular chapter you are going to be the sickest you've ever been in your life. You're going to need all of the latest advances in medical science just to keep you alive long enough for the elders to get there and administer to you. And you had better request that they heal your attitude before they heal your body.

Perhaps it's time to get serious. Fasting is the pathway to Eternal Life. Enos fasted all day and into the night to obtain a remission of sins. Alma called a two day fast that his son might also receive a remission of his sins. The Lord fasted forty days in preparation for his ministry. To paraphrase the words of Nephi relative to baptism, "If He being holy, have need of fasting, how much more have we, being unholy, need of fasting?" I don't know how a person can get close to the Lord without learning to fast and pray properly. Isaiah said it well:

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, AND THOU SEEST NOT? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, AND THOU TAKEST NO KNOWLEDGE? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard from on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul, is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? TO LOOSE THE BANDS OF WICKEDNESS, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not from thine own flesh.

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine HEALTH SHALL SPRING FORTH SPEEDILY; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, HERE I AM. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and SPEAKING VANITY;

And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday;

AND THE LORD SHALL GUIDE TREE CONTINUALLY, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. (Isaiah 58:1-12)

Health is the promise of the Lord for proper fasting and yet it is the lack of health that is used as the excuse for not fasting.

FASTING STRIPS THE DEVIL OF HIS POWER

If we were able to catalogue all of the works of the devil I'm sure that we would be surprised. There isn't a person, country or organization that doesn't bear the scars of Satan somewhere or other. In the New Testament there is the story about a boy who was called a lunatic. In our day and time I suppose that we would call him mentally ill. Here is the account:

And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed; for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.

And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

And Jesus said unto them, BECAUSE OF YOUR UNBELIEF: for, verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, YE SHALL SAY UNTO THIS MOUNTAIN, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; AND NOTHING SHALL BE IMPOSSIBLE UNTO YOU.

Howbeit this kind GOETH NOT OUT BUT BY PRAYER AND FASTING. (Matt 17:15-21)

Had the disciples understood the principle of fasting and prayer they could have cast Satan out themselves. Apparently there is a class of evil spirit that is so mean and ornery that it takes fasting to subdue him. The meaner they are the more humble we have to be. We gain humility by fasting.

The Savior chided them because of their unbelief and told them that if they had faith as a grain of mustard seed they could command the mountain to move and it would move. It isn't quite clear whether the Lord was pointing to a real mountain or whether the mountain was the problem that the disciples had not been able to solve. In either case His statement would be true.

The evil spirit which possessed the lad was his and his father's mountain or problem, and the Lord did remove it hence. He solved it for them. Now do you begin to see the importance of fasting? Fasting helps us to strip Satan of his power over us. It makes you want to shout praises to the Holy One of Israel, doesn't it? If you have had Satan on your back, you know what I mean, don't you?

THE LORD'S CALL

One of the most perplexing problems for leaders in the church is who to put in that position. When considering anyone for a position there is only one question that has to be resolved. Who does the Lord want? When the Lord tells you who he wants, it is easy to convince that person that the call comes from the Lord. But what if the Lord calls someone that is unworthy? That is the Lord's business. Don't you think the Lord knows the person better than you do? And isn't every call a personal call to repentance? Well, if I can't convince you maybe the Lord can --

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, AND CONTINUED ALL NIGHT IN PRAYER UNTO GOD.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles. (Luke 6:12-13)

I want to suggest to you that He not only prayed all night but He fasted along with His praying. Now, I can't prove this, but I doubt that He had a midnight snack.

I think He was fasting right along with His praying. And what was He praying about? What did He want to know? He wanted to know who to put into the quorum of the twelve apostles. That's right. And do you think that the Father told Him? Surely. Did not the Master so testify?

I have many things to say and to judge of you; but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I HAVE HEARD OF HIM.

They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.

The Hated Principle — Fasting

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I DO NOTHING OF MYSELF; but AS MY FATHER HATH TAUGHT ME, I speak of those things. (John 8:26-28)

Now that should be enough to convince anyone, but just in case it isn't, there is more.

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I SPEAK NOT OF MYSELF; but the that Father dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. (John 14:10)

Apparently the apostles understood this principle well. Through the death of Judas appeared the first vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve.

And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men shew whither of these two THOU HAST CHOSEN. (Acts 1:24)

First, they acknowledged that the Lord knew the hearts of all men. In that acknowledgment they realized that they didn't know the hearts of all men. Then they prayed simply, WHO DO YOU WANT, LORD?

There is a simpler way to call people. Make a list of names. Cancel out those who break the Word of Wisdom. Cross out the non-tithe payers. Cross off Sabbath breakers. That shortens the list, doesn't it? Now get rid of those you don't like for some reason or other. Now make the selection from the "worthy" ones, and don't bother fasting and praying about it anyway because that would take too much time and effort. Don't ask the Lord. After all, aren't you the one in authority? That's the easy way, but it isn't the Lord's way.

I'll never forget the story Paul Royal told several years ago. He was the Bishop of a ward. He needed a Relief Society President. He fasted and prayed and asked the Lord who He wanted. The Lord told him. He went to her home. She met him at the door with a cigarette in her hand. He told her that the Lord had called her to be the Relief Society President. She got a little flustered and said, "Why me? I'm not worthy. You could have called anyone in the ward and they would be more worthy than I." Bishop Royal answered and said, "That's right and if I were doing the calling I would have chosen anyone but you, but I'm not, and the Lord wants you." To make a long story short she gave up smoking and accepted the call six weeks later. She later became the Stake Relief Society President. Don't you see? Worthiness is not a factor in calling. The Lord would call many unworthy persons if we would ask Him. It is only a factor in accepting the call. Would they remain unworthy? Of course not. They would repent. They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.

Fasting to see who the Lord wants in a position is not new. Do you remember the account at Antioch?

As they ministered to the Lord, and FASTED, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had FASTED and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed....(Acts 13:2-4)

Do you see the role that the Holy Ghost played? He gave the instructions after the fasting and prayer. The others simply followed the instructions, but it is the fasting that's hard, isn't it? Now perhaps you're beginning to catch the vision. Very seldom does the Lord give instructions unless we ask Him. When we fast and pray this demonstrates to the Lord that we really want to know. When we really want to know, the Lord makes His wishes known.

FASTING -- SACRIFICIAL SUFFERING

Let us consider just for a moment the mission of Jesus Christ. His mission was to voluntarily lay down His life for His sheep. Of this, He said,

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I LAY IT DOWN OF MYSELF. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

This commandment have I received of my Father. (John 10:17-18)

Yes, He gave His life. It seems so simple, but was it? In it He was called to go to the outer reaches in pain, degradation and suffering. He was accused and brought before an earthly tribunal of scoundrels. Their intent was nothing but mischief. They placed a robe and a crown of thorns on His head and mocked Him as a fraudulent King. He was flogged and beaten. In this weakened condition they spit upon Him and forced Him to carry a cross until His strength gave out. Here Simon the Cyrenian was commanded to carry the cross the rest of the way. Then they laid the cross down. They stripped the Master of His clothes and laid Him out, naked, on the cross. Then they took nails and drove them into His hands, then into His wrists and then His feet. They dug a hole and lifted Him and the cross to the sky and let them fall. His body fell forward, tearing cruelly at the flesh in His hands and feet, but the nails held. Even then the taunting and mocking didn't end. It continued until He gave up the Ghost. However, even this suffering was not as intense as what He suffered in Gethsemane. Of this suffering the Master said:

Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit -- and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink. (D&C 19:18)

Do you begin to see what was entailed in the Savior's mission? His mission was to go through indescribable suffering for you and me, besides being embarrassed, inconvenienced and attacked by some of the most malicious people that ever lived.

Now, just assume that fasting does cause us a small degree of suffering or inconvenience. Could it ever approach the suffering that the Lord went through for us?

On one occasion I was invited to participate in a special fast. I readily agreed and then it was suggested that the fast would last two days. I swallowed hard. I hadn't been on a two day fast since leaving the mission field fifteen years before, but I agreed. After forty hours I was finished. Never had I voluntarily suffered such agonizing discomfort in my life. When Sunday School ended I went to the home of the fellow that had asked me to fast. I told him that I had had enough, that I was going to break the fast and save myself from starvation. He said, "Not until the appointed hour." Well, the appointed hour was sundown -- eight hours away. I went home, laid down and tried to sleep the rest of the way through the torture. That didn't work. At five in the afternoon I staggered upstairs and chastized the Lord in prayer for my suffering. He answered quickly. "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than He?" That didn't bring me any comfort. My suffering was so great I wasn't thinking of the Lord's suffering and it continued right to the end. When the sun sank in the west the fast was over. I warmed up a few leftovers, broke the fast and fell into bed, exhausted. Then the phone rang and in the next two hours, I discovered the purpose of the fast, and was I glad that I had suffered to the end.

That's right, I didn't even know the purpose of the fast. I had never been told. Now, when you don't know the purpose of a fast, Satan can boggle the mind trying to get you to call it off before it is finished. Sometimes the Lord instructs a person to fast for a period of time, and He doesn't tell him why and he doesn't find out until he has completed the fast.

Now don't let the description of the above fast frighten you. That is the only fast that I've been on that was that bad. Many of them fall into an entirely different category.

And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy FASTING may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy JOY may be full. Verily, this is FASTING and prayer, or in other words, REJOICING AND PRAYER. (D&C 59:13-14)

Do you see that? Fasting is a day of REJOICING. Isn't that beautiful? Now listen to the Lord describe the proper attitude of fasting.

And inasmuch as ye do these things with THANKSGIVING, with CHEERFUL HEARTS and countenances, not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance -- (D&C 59:15)

You mean I'm supposed to be grateful for the law of the fast, and I'm to be cheerful about it, and I'm to have a radiant countenance also? That is what the Lord is saying, and you'll be surprised at the next fasting attitude. If you fast correctly the Lord promises:

Verily, I say that inasmuch as ye do this, the FULLNESS of the earth is yours, the BEASTS of the field and the FOWLS of the air, and that which climbeth upon the trees and walketh upon the earth.

Yea, and the HERB, and the GOOD THINGS which come from the earth, whether for FOOD or for RAIMENT, or for HOUSES, or for BARNs, or for ORCHARDS, or for GARDENS, or for VINEYARDS;

Yea, ALL THINGS which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and use of man, both to please the eye and gladden the heart;

Yea, for FOOD and for RAIMENT, for TASTE and for SMELL, to STRENGTHEN THE BODY and to ENLIVEN the soul.

And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgement, not to excess, neither by extortion. (D&C 59:16-20)

Yes, when we finally learn how to fast and pray properly, fasting becomes a joyous experience. If fasting is less than that in our lives, we just haven't learned how to do it properly. But consider the promise again.

1. The fullness of the earth is yours. (D&C 59:16)
2. Thy health shall spring forth SPEEDILY. (Isaiah 58:8)
3. The Lord shall guide thee continually. (Isaiah 58:11)

When the third promise begins to come into play in a person's life, then things really get interesting. A good friend of mine was in the temple. He was sixty-nine years of age and had had two severe heart attacks. The Spirit of the Lord whispered to his mind, saying, "Fast three days." The reaction of most of us would be panic. We would say, "Lord, why me? You know that I've had severe health problems. You know I can't fast. I'm too old. Why, it might even kill me." However, this was not the reaction of my friend. He went home, knelt in humble prayer and told the Lord that he had received the communication and humbly thanked the Lord. You see, he trusted the Lord and he had forty years of fasting experience behind him. He would rather have died than to be disobedient to the Lord. He planned the fast for the long weekend. Near the end of the fast, early in the morning, he was awakened by the Spirit and given instructions pertaining to a heavy burden that he had been carrying. He followed those instructions and the burden was lifted.

I don't want to be dogmatic about fasting. I know that there are some people who can't fast, but for every five people who really can't there are ninety-five who just think they can't. And for those that really can't, perhaps it's because they didn't want to live the law in the first place. Ponder it and then inquire of the Lord if you are one of them.

For you that want to serve the Lord I'll issue you a small challenge. Get serious with the Lord and ask Him in earnest prayer, Lord, teach me how to fast and pray properly. If you haven't been used to having your prayers answered you are in for a shock. Try it and see.

THE CRISIS

The tragedy about fasting is that it has developed into the "crisis" principle. Seldom is it used except in time of deep trouble or desperation and often not even then. Fasting is something that has to be learned and practiced consistently. When we approach the Lord in the spirit of desperation because of a crisis, often our faith is lacking and when that happens we severely handicap the Lord because He works by virtue of our faith. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we knew how to fast and pray properly so that when a crisis came we would already have experience. We would know exactly what to do. Fasting is something that we don't learn in one fast. Let me illustrate.

A number of years ago a woman said to me: "I've been married 16 years and I'm no closer to going to the temple than I was 16 years ago."

"Do you Want to go to the temple?" I asked.

"Yes," she responded.

I said, "Are you willing to pay the price?"

She answered, smiling, "How much is it going to cost me?"

"Nothing to me," I said, "But to the Lord -- PLENTY."

The challenge was made and accepted. It was an old story one that has been told in the church thousands of times. Her husband was inactive. He just wasn't interested in the gospel. He had no desire to take her to the temple. Before the discussion ended this woman decided that she would start fasting and praying for her husband. Now she didn't know a great deal about fasting except that it was usually remembered in their home about the time that they sat down to breakfast on Fast Sunday. That's usually about eighteen hours late, isn't it? She decided, in order to show her determination to the Lord, that she would fast once a week. That's pretty heavy. Why, she could turn into a religious fanatic. You know what a religious fanatic is, don't you? That's someone that is trying to live the gospel better than I am.

Six months of fasting once a week went by, and to tell the truth, not much seemed to happen. One day I said to her,

"As you continue to fast, the Lord is going to turn your thoughts away from your husband, and you are going to start concentrating on yourself."

That drew a blank stare. I could see that she didn't understand. The statement was completely premature. Six more months of fasting once a week went before it started to happen. She began to get interested in personal repentance. I reminded her of the statement that had been made six months earlier. It took one year's fasting (52 fasts) before she was able to begin on the subject of repentance. I fear she is not the only one in this category. Confession of sins to the Lord was discussed at great length. I didn't teach anything else. I trusted in the Lord to fill in the blanks in personal revelation. What I want to illustrate here is what happens when a person is prepared through much fasting experience.

One day this woman received a phone call from a serviceman that had returned to Utah from Guam. He had a problem. He had two little children, a boy, two, and a girl, three years of age. His wife was a black. He alleged that she had been unfaithful and was now involved in the drug scene. The marriage had deteriorated. Divorce was the solution the serviceman had decided upon. His request was simple. Could she take care of the little

children for four days while he obtained a divorce. Hesitantly, she agreed. The four days stretched into ten but she didn't seem to mind. She had fallen in love with the little children. When the father finally came and took them she felt prompted not to take any money for her service. That stumped the father, but after discussion, he reluctantly agreed. In a couple of weeks the father called again and asked if she would take them again. She readily agreed. This time she took care of them for about a week.

A couple of weeks later, the lady who took care of the little children received a prompting. The Spirit said, "Fast today." She was in Ogden shopping when the prompting came and she didn't pay much attention, but when she started to put food in the oven for dinner, the Spirit of the Lord said to her, "Fast today, I mean it." Remember, she had been fasting once a week for four years. It came through loud and clear this time. She served the family dinner, but she didn't eat. She started to fast immediately. That evening her seventeen year old daughter had a date with one of the town drug pushers. The daughter had arranged for one of the young men in the ward to front for the drug pusher so her mother wouldn't know her intentions. The drug pusher did not meet her due to a small rumble in Ogden that developed later. You would expect the story to end there but it didn't. Two fellows drove up and invited this lonely girl to go for a ride. Foolishly, she accepted, as she was acquainted with one of them. The next four hours they drove around Ogden and Salt Lake City. One of the men invited her to go to California with them. They made it sound very inviting. Finally they ended up back in town. The driver went into a drive-in to get a package of cigarettes. His partner turned to the girl and said, "Honey, if you want to get out of this, you'd better get out now. This guy is on parole from the state penitentiary and he'll cause you nothing but trouble." Wisely, she fled.

When she got home her mother was waiting up for her. It was ten minutes after one in the morning. The mother asked a few questions. Finally the daughter told the above story to her mother as I've told it to you. A heart to heart talk followed. About two-thirty in the morning, after the mother had knelt in prayer to thank the Lord for having protected her daughter, and as she lay in bed pondering the events of the day, the Spirit of the Lord spoke to her, saying, "You took two of my little ones in and gave them love, care and protection and because you did this for my little ones, this night I have taken care of your daughter for you."

These things seldom happen when we don't know how to fast and pray properly. Isn't it wonderful to be prepared. How would you like that kind of protection for your daughter?

There are three ways that this crisis could have been met.

With EXPERIENCED fasting and prayer,

With DESPERATE fasting and prayer, or

Without ANY fasting and prayer.

How do you handle the crises in your life?

CHAPTER 14

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM

"See that ye are not baptized unworthily." (Mormon 9:29)

It is obvious in the scriptures that when they talk of preparation for baptism they are talking to those that are already accountable, or past the age of eight years. Shortly after Moroni was called to the ministry, disputations arose in the church concerning the baptism of little children. Mormon inquired of the Lord on the matter and testifies:

*...And the word of the Lord came to me by the Power of the Holy Ghost, saying:
Listen to the words of Christ, your Redeemer, your Lord and your God. Behold, I came into the world not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; the whole need no physician, but they that are sick; wherefore, little children are whole, for they are not capable of committing sin; wherefore the curse of Adam is taken from them in me, that it hath no power over them, and the law of circumcision is done away in me.
And after this manner did the Holy Ghost manifest the word of God unto me; wherefore, my beloved son, I know that it is solemn mockery before God that ye should baptize little children. Behold, I say unto you that this thing shall ye teach -- repentance and baptism unto those WHO ARE ACCOUNTABLE AND CAPABLE OF COMMITTING SIN:
yea, teach parents that they must repent and be baptized, and humble themselves AS THEIR LITTLE CHILDREN, and they shall all be saved with their little children.
And their little children need no repentance, neither baptism. Behold, baptism is unto repentance to the fulfilling the commandments unto the remission of sins.
But LITTLE CHILDREN ARE ALIVE IN CHRIST, even from the foundation of the world... (Moroni 8:7-12)*

From the above it is clear that little children are completely covered by the atonement of Christ. The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith:

But little children are HOLY, being SANCTIFIED through the atonement of Jesus Christ...(D&C 74:7)

At the risk of going contrary to the belief of many members of the church, I would like to suggest that little children, being holy and sanctified, on many occasions have access to the Holy Ghost even though they haven't been baptized and confirmed. In Alma's great sermon on faith, he testified:

And now, he imparted his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; LITTLE CHILDREN DO HAVE WORDS GIVEN UNTO THEM MANY TIMES, which confound the wise and the learned. (Alma 32:23)

After the Lord's three day ministry to the Nephites Mormon testified that He came and visited them often. On one of these occasions the following is recorded:

*And it came to pass that he did teach and minister unto the CHILDREN of the multitude of whom hath been spoken, and he DID LOOSE THEIR TONGUES, and they did speak unto their fathers great and marvelous things, EVEN GREATER than he had revealed unto the people; and he loosed their tongues that they could utter...
Behold, it came to pass on the morrow that the multitude gathered themselves together, and they both saw and heard these CHILDREN; yea, even BABES did open their mouths and UTTER MARVELOUS THINGS; and the things which they did utter were FORBIDDEN THAT THERE SHOULD NOT ANY MAN WRITE THEM. (III Nephi 26:14, 16)*

One of the most touching scenes in Holy Writ happened to little children. The Savior called all of the sick to Him and He healed them. So overcome was the crowd that they pressed around Him, bathing His feet with their tears. Then the Master commanded that their little children be brought to Him. He then prayed to the Father concerning the wickedness of the house of Israel. Then He prayed again and delivered a sermon so sacred that it was not allowed to be recorded. Neither were the words of the prayer.

And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith.

And now behold, my joy is full.

And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little CHILDREN, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

And when he had done this he wept again;

And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes toward heaven, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them. (III Nephi 17:20-24)

Let me add what I have seen and heard. At one time in our lives the Spirit of the Lord was in our home in power for a period of six days. During those six days the prayers that my wife and I offered were different. To say they were different is a gross understatement. They were not our prayers. They were given to us by the Holy Spirit. We had three little children at the time. Even their prayers were different. They uttered words and sentences that they had never uttered before. I remember well our four year old son, Brett, saying in prayer, "We are thankful for Jesus." This was a statement that he had never used before. But how can I convey on paper the feeling that surged through us as the Spirit bore witness of the Master when these words were spoken? And how can I describe the emotion that we felt as the tears coursed down our cheeks while we wept in gratitude? It has to be experienced to be understood. Yes, little children can speak through the Holy Ghost and they are protected from the evil one.

But, behold, I say unto you, that little children are redeemed from the foundation of the world through mine Only Begotten; WHEREFORE, THEY CANNOT SIN, for POWER IS NOT GIVEN UNTO SATAN TO TEMPT LITTLE CHILDREN, until they begin to be accountable before me; For it is given unto them even as I will, according to mine own pleasure, that GREAT THINGS may be required at the hand of their FATHERS. (D&C 29:46-49)

This scripture used to bother me. Frankly, I just didn't believe that Satan could not tempt little children. I had seen some little children that acted as if they were the reincarnation of Satan himself. That was my hangup. I didn't know that they were either acting independently or that Satan had gotten to them indirectly. The day came when it was time to baptize my eldest-son. The next day I confirmed him a member of the Church in fast meeting. Not ten minutes after we returned home he was sitting on the bed in his sister's room. I asked him to do something for me. He turned instantly and looked at me. The burning hatred that I saw in his eyes I shall never forget. If looks could harm I would have been destroyed. I have never witnessed such hatred pouring from a child's eyes. He is now sixteen but I have never seen that look again. I am extremely grateful. But I thought it rather odd that on the day that he had received the injunction to "Receive the Holy Ghost," that within one hour of his confirmation it was the unholy spirit that was activated. The above scripture in section 29 became perfectly clear.

BAPTISM PREPARATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE ACCOUNTABLE

Preparation for baptism by those who are accountable is much different than for the eight year old, and for those who meet the requirements it is even suggested that a remission of sins is possible prior to baptism.

And again, by way of COMMANDMENT to the church concerning the manner of baptism -- ALL those who HUMBLE them selves 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 a 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. (D&C 20:37)

What I want to stress is the preparation. This is also confirmed by Moroni.

And now I speak concerning baptism . Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and THEY WERE NOT BAPTIZED save they brought forth fruit meet THAT THEY WERE WORTHY OF IT.

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.

And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a DETERMINATION to serve him to the end.

And after they had been received unto baptism and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ, and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God...(Moroni 6:1-4)

Nephi also stresses the proper preparation for baptism in probably the greatest writing on the subject ever given.

*Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with FULL PURPOSE OF HEART, acting NO HYPOCRISY and DECEPTION before God, but with REAL INTENT, REPENTING of your sins, WITNESSING unto the Father that ye are willing to TAKE UPON YOU THE NAME OF CHRIST, by baptism - yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, **then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; and THEN can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.** (II Nephi 31:13)*

Now let's review the preparation requirements:

HUMILITY

DESIRE FOR BAPTISM

BROKEN HEART

CONTRITE SPIRIT

WITNESS OF REPENTANCE

WILLING TO TAKE THE NAME OF CHRIST

DETERMINE TO SERVE HIM TO THE END

FULL PURPOSE OF HEART

NO HYPOCRISY

NO DECEPTION

REAL INTENT

MANIFEST WORKS

But what about those that get into the church and have not met the above requirements? Can they still meet them? Of course. It may take some time and some sincere repentance but they can still make the grade. Do those people who are pressured into the Church or those who come in by fraud receive the Holy Ghost at their confirmation? How could they? They haven't met the requirements.

For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and HE RECEIVE NOT THE GIFT? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices he in him who is the giver of the gift. (D&C 88:33)

Preparation For Baptism

When a person enters the church on any other basis than complete honesty the confirmation is nothing more than an admonition to get straight with the Lord so that the time might come when the promise of the Holy Ghost might be fulfilled.

For those of us that came into the church at age eight the same is usually true. **We also have to meet the above requirement sooner or later if we expect to receive the Holy Ghost, a remission of our sins, and experience the many attendant gifts.**

CHAPTER 15

THE SYNONYMS

*"And the Lord said unto me; **Marvel not that all mankind**, yea, **MEN and WOMEN**, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, **must be BORN AGAIN**: yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters." (Mosiah 27:25)*

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. (John 3:1,2)

Nicodemus was obviously curious. Perhaps he didn't want his fellow rulers to know that he wanted to talk to Jesus, so he went by night. Did he flatter or was he really sincere? It's hard to tell. He even mentioned the miracles done by Jesus. Perhaps he wanted one done for him. The Lord seemed to pay little attention to his remarks. He changed the subject completely by returning to a basic doctrine and stating a simple gospel fact - one of which Nicodemus was completely ignorant.

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, **except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, He cannot enter into the kingdom of God.***

That which is born of FLESH is FLESH: and that which is born of the SPIRIT is SPIRIT.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? (John 3:3-9)

Nicodemus was overwhelmed by the simple doctrine. He was one of the authorities of the day and he knew absolutely nothing about being BORN AGAIN. It's tough for a ruler to admit his ignorance but that is exactly what he did. Then the Lord's chastisement continued:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and KNOWEST NOT these things? (John 3:10)

When we think of the mission of Jesus Christ we generally think of the atonement, and His opening the doors of everlasting life through the resurrection. But the Savior also had another very important mission. The very one about which he has just told Nicodemus.

When the people were wondering whether John the Baptist was the Christ or not,

John answered, saying unto them all. I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall BAPTIZE you with the HOLY GHOST and with fire. (Luke 3:16)

This part of His mission continued even after the resurrection. When He visited the Nephites He said:

...Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the word of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your SERVANTS; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I WILL

BAPTIZE YOU WITH FIRE AND WITH THE HOLY GHOST; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am. (III Nephi 12:1)

Now pertaining to those who would be baptized by the Nephite twelve, the Lord said:

And again, MORE BLESSED are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of hum ility and be baptized, for they shall be VISITED with FIRE and with the HOLY GHOST and shall receive a remission of their sins. (III Nephi 12:2)

And then the Master added,

And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after RIGHTEOUSNESS, for THEY shall be FILLED with the HOLY GHOST. (III Nephi 12:6)

And just prior to that the Lord had made the following statement:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the FATHER bear record of me, for he will visit him with FIRE AND WITH THE HOLY GHOST. And THUS will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father and I and the Holy Ghost are one. And again I say unto you, YE MUST REPENT and BECOME AS A LITTLE CHILD and be BAPTIZED in my NAME, or YE CAN IN NO WISE RECEIVE THESE THINGS. (III Nephi 11:35-37)

At this point it might be appropriate to point out that the requirements necessary to receive the Baptism of the Holy Ghost are the same as those to receive the Baptism of water. However, several additional requirements are mentioned. Did you catch them? (See Chapter 4)

HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS
BE BAPTIZED OF WATER
BELIEVE IN CHRIST
BECOME AS A LITTLE CHILD

Jesus taught that a person must be born again. Let us briefly analyze what happens when a person is born into mortality. As we understand it, the body and spirit constitute the soul of man. When people enter into the process of bringing children into the world they become co-creators of human life. In this process we should be reminded of the tremendous potential and possibility of becoming heavenly parents ourselves. While the new life awaits to be born it is completely encased in water. This could be symbolic of baptism where a person is completely immersed in water. When the body and spirit are united, a new soul is created on earth. A part of that new soul is a spirit recently come from the presence of God. However, sometimes it doesn't happen that way. Sometimes, for reasons which can only be given in revelation, a baby may be born without the spirit. We call this a stillborn baby. The spirit for some reason or other does not enter into the body and give it life.

Now Jesus taught that a person must be BORN AGAIN How does it happen? When a person goes down into the water to be baptized he is completely surrounded by water as he was before he was born. The next step is to receive the Holy Ghost. If we have met the requirements the Holy Ghost will come, but what if we haven't? Then we end up with only a water baptism -- physically alive, but spiritually dead.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all baptisms by those who are accountable were like the one described by Mormon in III Nephi?

And they did pray for that which they MOST DESIRED; and they desired that the HOLY GHOST should be given to them.

The Synonyms

And when they had thus prayed they all went down unto the water's edge, and the multitude followed them.

And it came to pass that Nephi went down into the water and was baptized. And he came up out of the water and began to baptize. And he baptized those whom Jesus had chosen.

*And it came to pass when they were all baptized and had come up out of the water, **the HOLY GHOST DID FALL UPON THEM, and they were FILLED with the Holy Ghost and with FIRE.***
(III Nephi 19:9-13)

Not only were they filled with the Holy Ghost, but they were encircled about with fire, angels came and ministered to them and the Lord then made another appearance.

Was Simon among the group that received the Holy Ghost? He was among the group that had been baptized. He might also have been among them that received the laying on of hands, but he was certainly not one who received the Holy Ghost. Do you think that just having received the Holy Ghost that he would do what is recorded?

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whom soever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou HAST THOUGHT that the GIFT OF GOD may be purchased with money.

Thou hast neither PART nor LOT in this matter; for thy HEART is not right with God.

REPENT therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the THOUGHT of THINE HEART may be forgiven thee.

For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. (Acts 8:8-24)

It appears that Simon was thinking how he could marry witchcraft with priestcraft to get gain, but Peter refused to join the enterprise.

To reinforce what has been said, I remember well being taught when I was just a child that at the time of my confirmation I would receive a very special gift. It was called the Holy Ghost. I was delighted and looked forward to the time of my baptism and confirmation. I was expecting something wonderful to happen. You know what? It didn't come and I came home from my baptism and confirmation at the age of eight, very disappointed. I was certain that my parents had deceived me. What good was a gift that I couldn't see, feel or touch? Well, one day the Holy Ghost did come and I did RECEIVE it, but I was thirty-four years old. Wasn't it the same with Enos, Alma and the subjects of King Benjamin? They didn't even mention their baptism by water but they surely mentioned the baptism by Fire. That was the experience that they wanted us to know about. Perhaps this is one of the Lord's alternate plans for He said:

And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the LAYING ON OF HANDS. (D&C 68:27)

That's what I received -- the laying on of hands, but I certainly did not receive the Holy Ghost at that time. Now don't get me wrong. There are many times in my life when the Spirit has spoken to my spirit prior to the BORN AGAIN experience, but they were not the BORN AGAIN EXPERIENCE. They were only pointing me in that direction.

So important is the doctrine of Sanctification that it is called by a dozen different names and probably more. Synonyms are words that mean the same. I have taken the liberty to include phrases that also mean the same. All of these names reflect what the Lord does in repentance. You see what he does is an hundred fold more important than what we do, but we nonetheless have to do our part to set it in motion. Now what are the dozen names?

The Synonyms

BORN AGAIN (Mosiah 27:25)
 BORN OF GOD (Mosiah 27:25)
 BAPTISM OF FIRE (III Nephi 12:1,2)
 BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST (Luke 3:16)
 BORN OF THE SPIRIT (John 3:3-5)
 CONVERSION (Luke 22:32) (Mosiah 2
 CLEAN (D&C 110:5)
 RECEPTION OF THE HOLY GHOST (III Nephi 27:20)
 SPIRITUAL HEALING (III Nephi 9:13) (D&C 112:13)
 REGENERATION (Titus 3:5)
 SANCTIFICATION (III Nephi 27:20)

Why did the Lord give the same doctrine and experience so many names? Frankly, I don't know. Perhaps He thought that we might discover just one of them and become converted.

What I now wish to point out is that a testimony is something that is inherent in the above experience, but the testimony experience is not necessarily accompanied with conversion. In other words, all people who have been converted automatically have a testimony, but not all people who have a testimony have been converted. Peter's case is the prime example.

*When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?
 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?
 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God.
 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona:
 for flesh and blood hath not REVEALED it unto thee, but MY FATHER which is in heaven.
 (Matt 16:13-17)*

There is one of the strongest testimonies ever born. You can feel the ring of conviction as Peter makes the declaration. Yet a short time later, on the Night of the betrayal, the following took place:

*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift you as wheat:
 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when THOU ART CONVERTED, strengthen thy brethren.
 And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. (Luke 22:31-33)*

How bold and daring Peter felt, but the Lord brought him down to earth with --

And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. (Luke 22:34)

Then followed the three most important days in the history of the world. The Son of Man was betrayed, tried, convicted and crucified, but on the third day Mary Magdalene discovered that He had risen from the dead. She went to the disciples and reported her discovery.

*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, CAME JESUS and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.
 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

The Synonyms

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

*And when he had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto them, **RECEIVE YE THE HOLY GHOST:***

Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:19-23)

Approximately fifty days later on the day of Pentecost --

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit GAVE THEM UTTERANCE. (Acts 2:2-4)

Peter was converted or "changed" and so were the rest of the apostles. If you'll finish the second chapter of Acts you'll discover the New Peter.

Here is another incident important to this discussion. On the day that the gospel was first preached in England, the Prophet received a revelation for the President of the Twelve, Thomas B. Marsh. In it President Marsh was instructed:

And pray for thy brethren of the Twelve. Admonish them sharply for my name's sake, and let them be admonished for all their sins, and be ye faithful before me unto my name.

*And after their temptations, and much tribulation, behold, I, the Lord, will feel after them, and if they harden not their hearts, and stiffen not their necks against me, **they shall be CONVERTED, and I shall HEAL them.** (D&C 112:12-13)*

The year was 1837. Apparently, some of the apostles were in exactly the same condition that Peter was before his conversion. Perhaps you can begin to see the extent of the problem. If apostles have a problem becoming converted, how much more of a problem do we have? **But don't get discouraged. It is there for everyone that will pay the price. Don't harden your heart or become stiffnecked, and you will make it.**

The Lord has made it very clear that the "BORN AGAIN" experience is necessary in order to enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5) There is another word that we've discovered means exactly the same thing - SANCTIFICATION. **The Lord has made it clear that only the sanctified will enter the Celestial Kingdom.**

*And they who are **NOT SANCTIFIED** through the Law which I have given unto you, even the Law of Christ, **MUST inherit another kingdom**, even that of a Terrestrial kingdom, or that of a Telesstial kingdom. (D&C 88:21)*

And how does one attain to the state of the sanctified?

*Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, **that ye may be SANCTIFIED by the RECEPTION OF THE HOLY GHOST, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.** (III Nephi 27:20)*

It is commonly believed by many members of the church that if a person has been baptized and confirmed that he has also received the Holy Ghost. I've tried to show that this is not always the case. In fact, it is seldom the case. Listen to what the Lord has said to the elders of His church:

*And ye are to be taught from on high. **SANCTIFY YOURSELVES and ye shall be endowed with power**, that ye may give even as I have spoken. (D&C43:16)*

The Synonyms

That statement was made to the elders of the church. Had they not already been baptized and confirmed? **If they had already been SANCTIFIED through the RECEPTION of the Holy Ghost why did the Lord command them to sanctify themselves? Would the Lord command them to sanctify themselves if they were already sanctified? Perhaps they were just like a lot of us today. Many of us have received the LAYING ON OF HANDS, but we are still waiting for the reception of the Holy Ghost.**

When a baby is born into the world it is totally dependent on its parents. As it grows and develops it becomes more and more independent until finally it reaches maturity. When the child has grown to an adult and becomes completely independent then we can rejoice. But there is another step in our growth that we should consider. When a person is "born again" he is ready to embark on a new stage of growth and development. He becomes "dependent" again, but not on his earthly parents. He now enters the realms of faith and just like a newborn babe he begins to grow spiritually. Perhaps the next step is to become again independent in the realms of the Gods. Now that we know the many different names that the Lord has used to describe the same experience perhaps we can better understand the words of Nephi.

*Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; **and THEN cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.** And **THEN are ye in this straight and narrow path which LEADS TO ETERNAL LIFE.** (// Nephi 31:17,18)*

At this particular point one sage member of the church remarked that it looked as if "enduring to the beginning" was the real problem. After all, we have to find the straight and narrow path before we are ready to endure to the end.

CHAPTER 16

THE VOICE

"Pilate therefore said unto him , Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth HEARETH MY VOICE. (John 18:37)

How often have you heard this remark, "I wouldn't recognize the Lord's voice if He spoke to me."? This may be referring to the direct method, for surely most of us have certainly heard the Lord's voice indirectly. Concerning these two methods the Lord said:

What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled whether by MINE OWN VOICE or the VOICE OF MY SERVANTS, it is the same.

The two methods are clearly shown here. The Lord's voice is the direct method. The voice of His servants is the indirect method. To hear the voice of the Lord by either method is a thrilling experience, but there are problems that may occur with both. In the first it is possible for Satan to whisper to our minds and deceive us. In other words, we may think that we are listening to the voice of the Lord when it is the other spirit that is giving the prompting.

Hearing the Lord's voice through His servants presents another problem. It is possible for the servant, although we don't like to admit it, to be wrong. Infallibility is not a doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In order for a person to qualify to be a servant, he must be acting and saying what the Lord would do or say. If he does not, he disqualifies himself in that particular instance as a servant of Christ and is acting on his own. Can a person be called a "servant" if he is going contrary to the will of Him whom he serves? What qualifies him to be a servant?

And, behold, and lo, this is an ensample unto all those who were ordained unto the priesthood, whose mission is appointed unto them to go forth --And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

And whatsoever, they shall speak WHEN moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture,

shall be the will of the Lord,

shall be the mind of the Lord,

shall be the word of the Lord,

shall be the VOICE of the Lord,

and the power of God unto salvation.

Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants. (D&C 68:2-5)

Did you see the qualifying statement, "When MOVED upon by the Holy Ghost"? There are specific problems of which the Lord has warned His servants. Concerning those who have been called to be His servants the Lord warns:

Behold, there are MANY called, but FEW are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the THINGS OF THIS WORLD, and ASPIRE TO The HONORS OF MEN, that they do not learn this one lesson - That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven CANNOT be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of RIGHTEOUSNESS.

That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to COVER OUR SINS,

or to GRATIFY OUR PRIDE,

our VAIN AMBITION,

or to EXERCISE CONTROL or DOMINION or COMPULSION upon the souls of the children of men,
in ANY DEGREE OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, behold,
the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and
WHEN it is withdrawn, AMEN to the PRIEST HOOD or the AUTHORITY of that man. (D&C 121:34-37)

This is one of the most solemn warnings that has ever been issued to the Priesthood. It may appear that the above transgressions are just minor ones. Certainly they are not of the nature that would cause a person to become disconnected or separated from the church through being disfellowshipped or excommunicated. Why are the sins serious? Because, if continued, they can cause us to forfeit our right to the Spirit of the Lord. And if the Spirit of the Lord departs from us can we still be called servants? How can we declare the voice of the Lord when moved upon by the Holy Ghost when the Spirit has withdrawn from us or if we have never received the Holy Ghost in the first place? If we, in responsible positions, are guilty of any of the above transgressions, perhaps we should take a good look at ourselves for,

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm shall or hearken unto the precepts of men, save their precepts SHALL BE GIVEN by the POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST. (II Nephi 28:31)

It is one thing to find ourselves under a curse because we trust in false teachers outside of the church, but it is really sad to be under a curse because we trust in teachers inside of the church who knowingly or unknowingly teach false doctrine -- but how can we tell? That is the difficult part. If we are not in tune with the Spirit of the Lord ourselves, we can't. There is no way that we can escape that individual responsibility. The burden is on our own shoulders. It cannot be lifted. If we are to discern between truth and error ourselves, we must have access to the Spirit ourselves. The very same things which cause priesthood leaders to lose the Spirit will also cause us to lose the Spirit. If leader and follower both lose the Spirit, God will permit strong delusions that they might believe a lie and be damned. (II Thess 2:11, 12) Isaiah said it this way:

I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake they did not HEAR : but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not. (Isaiah 66:4)

DIRECTLY

Now that we have discussed hearing the VOICE of the Lord indirectly let us now turn our attention to the direct method. When a person preaches the gospel under the direction of the Spirit, his hearers receive the message indirectly. The speaker receives the message directly from the Holy Ghost. To receive the message directly is one of the greatest things that can happen to a person. To illustrate:

A young missionary was deep in the Ozarks on a sabbath day. He had to speak in a three family sacrament meeting that afternoon. He spent the early afternoon in preparation. He sought the Lord in earnest prayer asking for inspiration in delivering what he had prepared, but when he started talking the Spirit of the Lord took over. The subject that he preached wasn't remotely connected with the one which he had prepared. Both the small congregation and the elder heard that message for the very first time. The voice of the Lord came directly to the elder and indirectly to the small congregation.

THE PRISON CONVERSION

This case is almost unique. We don't hear of many conversions taking place behind prison doors. The time is approximately 30 BC. Eight thousand Lamanites have been baptized unto repentance in the land of Zarahemla. Nephi and Lehi leave Zarahemla to go to the land of Nephi. On the way they are captured by a Lamanite army and cast into prison. The VOICE of the Lord could have given them warning but it appears they had a mission to perform inside the jail.

And after they had been cast into prison many days without food, behold, they went forth into the prison to take them that they might slay them. (Hel 5:22)

How many days they fasted we don't know. However, they apparently started involuntarily. Do you suppose, that after surveying their difficult situation, they fasted voluntarily? Next we find,

And it came to pass that Nephi and Lehi were encircled about as if by fire, even in such that they durst not lay their hands upon them for fear lest they should be burned. Nevertheless, Nephi and Lehi were not burned; and they were as standing in the midst of fire and were not burned. And when they saw that they were encircled about with a pillar of fire, and that it burned them not, their hearts did take courage. (Hel 5:23,24)

This had a profound effect on the Lamanite guards. They were filled with fear and amazement. Nephi and Lehi attempted to quiet their fears and testified that it was the power of God that was keeping the Lamanites from slaying them. Then it appears that a slight tremor took place. The walls of the prison shook but did not fall. A cloud of darkness overshadowed them and then they really became frightened. At this point a VOICE spoke directly to them. It is written as follows:

And it came to pass that there came a VOICE as if it were above the cloud of darkness, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, and seek no more to destroy my servants whom I have sent unto you to declare good tidings. And it came to pass when they heard this VOICE, and beheld that it was not a VOICE of thunder, neither was it a VOICE of a great tumultuous noise, but behold, it was a still VOICE of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper, and it did pierce even to the very soul -- And behold the VOICE came again, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and seek no more to destroy my servants. And it came to pass that the earth shook again, and the walls trembled. (Hel 5:29,30,32)

Did you notice how the voice of the Lord came directly to the Lamanite guards calling them to repentance? It appears that when a corrupt government is in control that it is often the righteous who end up in prison and when a righteous government is in control, for the most part, the wicked are incarcerated. When criminals run a country the righteous are imprisoned.

These Lamanites, as you can see, were a captive audience. They were frozen with fear and they couldn't see because of the cloud of darkness. An apostate Nephite by the name of Aminadab was given power to look through the darkness. He saw Nephi and Lehi looking toward some being while encircled with fire. The whole group was then given power to see what Aminadab had described. Then they asked a very important question. How do we get rid of the darkness.

And Aminadab said unto them: You must repent, and cry unto the VOICE, even until you shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom; and when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you. And it came to pass that they all did begin to cry unto the VOICE of him who had shaken the earth; yea, they did cry even until the cloud of darkness was dispersed...

And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven, and did enter into their hearts, and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words.

And it came to pass that there came a VOICE unto them, yea, a pleasant VOICE, as if it were a whisper saying:

Peace, peace be unto you, because of your faith in my Well Beloved, who was from the foundation of the world. (Hel 5:41,42,45-47)

They were all encircled by fire and angels came down and ministered to them. It appears that both those who were in jail and those who were not experienced the glorious event and did you notice how many times the voice of the Lord spoke to them directly?

SATAN'S VOICE

Now it is interesting to note that we can also listen to Satan's voice directly or indirectly. He can speak directly to us or he can speak to us by the voice of his servants. The Lord is not pleased with us when we listen to the voice of Satan directly or indirectly. Cain lost his opportunity to gain eternal life by listening to the voice of Satan directly,

And Cain loved Satan more than God. And Satan commanded him, saying: Make an offering unto the Lord.

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. (Moses 5:19,20)

Do you begin to see why the offering was not accepted? Cain obeyed the voice of Satan. It was Satan who commanded Cain to make offering to the the Lord. Abel made his offering at the command of God. His sacrifice was accepted. This filled Cain with wrath. His countenance fell.

And the Lord said unto Cain: Why art thou wroth? Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, thou shalt be accepted. And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door, and Satan desireth to have thee; and except thou shalt hearken unto MY COMMANDMENTS, I will deliver thee up....

And Cain was wroth, and listened not any more to the voice of the Lord, neither to Abel, his brother, who walked in holiness before the Lord. (Moses 5:22,23,26)

At this point Cain became so jealous of his brother that he was no longer ready to listen to the voice of the Lord directly or indirectly, through his brother. Anger, hate, and revenge consumed him as he began to plot the death of Abel.

The Lord is not pleased with us when we seek to solve our problems by leaving Him out of the picture. That is exactly what the people were doing in the days of Enoch.

And he heard a voice from heaven, saying: Enoch, my son, prophesy unto this people, and say unto them -- Repent, for thus saith the Lord: I am angry with this people, and my fierce anger is kindled against them; for their hearts have waxed hard, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes cannot see afar off;

And for these many generations, ever since the day that I created them, have they gone astray, and HAVE DENIED ME, and have SOUGHT THEIR OWN COUNSELS in the dark. (Moses 6:27,28)

And Enoch continued his speech, saying: The Lord which spake with me, the same is the God of Heaven, and he is my God, and your God, and ye are my brethren, and WHY COUNSEL ye yourselves, and DENY the God of heaven? (Moses 6:43)

Is it any wonder that the Lord was so unhappy with them. They were getting their counsel directly and indirectly from the father of lies. It is much easier to get counsel from a person than from God. It requires faith and repentance to get counsel from God, along with much prayer and fasting. The people in the days of Enoch were

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not willing to pay the price. Because of this He promised that He had prepared them a death and a hell if they did not repent. (Moses 6:29)

Are we any different today? When we have a problem to whom do we go? In the world today there are so many professional people around that we usually go to our Heavenly Father last. We go to doctors, lawyers, teachers, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, clergymen and a host of others before we go to our Heavenly Father. We deny the God of heaven just as Enoch's people did. How often we seek counsel from completely alien sources because we are either afraid of what our Heavenly Father would say, or we have not the faith that He would answer. Remember what the Lord has said:

Cursed is he that putteth his trust in man, or maketh flesh his arm, or shall hearken unto the precepts of men, SAVE THEIR PRECEPTS SHALL BE GIVEN BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST. (II Nephi 28:31)

The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that,

The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that MAN SHOULD NOT COUNSEL HIS FELLOW MAN, Neither TRUST in the arm of flesh - But that EVERY MAN MIGHT SPEAK in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world. (D&C 1:19,20)

What would the Lord have us do? It is very simple. First we must, RESPECT AND STUDY THE SCRIPTURES (the voice of the Lord indirectly to us); RESPECT THE LORD'S SERVANTS (same as above); and DEVELOP THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST (that we may hear the Lord's VOICE DIRECTLY).

When a baby is born into the world it is very important that the parents talk to the child. Through hearing the voice of the parents and others the child learns to speak. He also learns to take instructions from his parents. It is no different with our heavenly parents. They have to communicate with us and we with them if we are to come to know them. Eternal life is based on knowing God. The Lord said:

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent. (John 17:3)

When communication has been established with our Heavenly Father, after a period of time, we actually come to know Him. Nephi implies that this happens when we are baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost.

But, behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not KNOWN me. (II Nephi 31:14)

After the baptism of fire in which a person hears the voice of the Lord directly, he may still choose not to obey the Lord and go his own way. But he will have to suffer the consequences. It is one thing to hear the voice of the Lord and quite another to hearken or obey.

And the Spirit giveth light to EVERY MAN that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that HEARKENETH to the VOICE of the Spirit. (D&C 84:46)

If we choose not to hearken to the Voice of God, the time comes when the Spirit withdraws from us.

*And whoso receiveth not MY VOICE is not acquainted with MY VOICE, and is not of me.
And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groaneth
under sin and darkness even now. (D&C 84:52,53)*

Apparently there are many in the world who have heard His voice and not obeyed.
Where do you stand? Have you heard His voice directly?

CHAPTER 17

THE PROMISE

*"Seek not for riches but for wisdom; and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. **Behold, he that hath ETERNAL LIFE is rich.**" (D&C 11:7)*

In the foregoing chapters we have discussed at great length one idea. That one idea was that it is possible for the Lord to make known to an individual that his sins are forgiven. In the chapter on "synonyms" we discovered that it is called by at least a dozen different names. Let's refer to it as the "born again" experience. It represents the Lord accepting the baptismal ordinance unto an actual remission of sins. The person knows that his sins are forgiven for the Lord reveals it to him through the power of the Holy Ghost. Now there is one thing that we should understand. The Lord has the final say on all of the ordinances and all of the rest of the things that we do in life as to whether they are acceptable to Him or not. He is the final judge. He said it as follows:

And verily I say unto you, that the conditions of this law are these:

All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by REVELATION and COMMANDMENT through the medium of mine anointed whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power are of no EFFICACY, VIRTUE OR FORCE in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all CONTRACTS that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead. (D&C 132:7)

What does it mean to be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise? It is really very simple. It is the promise of Eternal Life. It is recorded thus:

Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you who have assembled yourselves together to receive his will concerning you:

Behold, this is pleasing unto your Lord, and the angels rejoice over you; the alms of your prayers have come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded in the book of the names of the sanctified, even them of the celestial world.

Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE; which other comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.

***This comforter IS THE PROMISE which I GIVE UNTO YOU OF ETERNAL LIFE,** even the glory of the Celestial kingdom. (D&C 88:104)*

It is apparent from the above revelation that for those who were assembled that day the promise of eternal life was given. Of all the goals that should fire the imagination of the Latter-Day Saints, this one should. Can you imagine the Lord saying to you? "I promise you eternal life." That is exactly what he said to those that were assembled that day. Nephi gave us a strong indication of what we must do in order to receive this promise. He indicated that after a person had been baptized and forgiven of his sins by fire and the Holy Ghost that he was now on the straight and narrow path.

And then are ye in this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that IF ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this straight and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the

word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.

Wherefore, ye must PRESS FORWARD with a STEADFASTNESS IN CHRIST, having a perfect brightness of HOPE, and a LOVE OF GOD and of ALL MEN. Wherefore, IF ye shall press forward, FEASTING upon the WORD OF CHRIST, and ENDURE TO THE END, behold, thus saith the Father: YE SHALL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (II Nephi 31:18-20)

Joseph Smith said it this way:

After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and received the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to HUMBLE himself before God, HUNGERING and THIRSTING after RIGHTEOUSNESS, and LIVING by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, Thou SHALT BE EXALTED. (Teachings of PJS p 150)

There was a Patriarch that lived in Layton, Utah who lived over one hundred years. Three weeks prior to his death he was chatting with a good friend. He informed his friend that the Spirit of the Lord had spoken to him and told him "that his life had been accepted of the Lord, and that he would soon be called home."

When Alma was in a state of fearing that he should do wrong in the sight of God and worrying about his errant son the Lord spoke to him and said:

And because thou hast inquired of me concerning the transgressor, (his own son) thou art blessed.

Thou art my servant; and I covenant with thee that Thou SHALT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE: and thou shalt serve me and go forth in my name, and shalt gather together my sheep.

And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church, and him will I also receive. (Mosiah 26:19-21)

The promise of eternal life was also given to the twelve that the Lord chose in the Americas. To nine of them the Lord said:

Blessed are ye because ye desired this thing of me; therefore, after that ye are seventy and two years old ye shall COME UNTO ME IN MY KINGDOM: AND WITH ME SHALL FIND REST. (III Nephi 28:3)

To the other three He promised:

Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven. And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and THEN SHALL YE BE BLESSED IN THE KINGDOM OF MY FATHER. (III Nephi 28:7,8)

When Moroni was praying that the gentiles might have charity the Lord spake to him in this manner:

If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou has been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, EVEN UNTO THE SITTING DOWN IN THE PLACE WHICH I HAVE PREPARED IN THE MANSIONS OF MY FATHER. (Ether 12:37)

The promise was given to Joseph the Prophet in this manner:

For I am the Lord thy God and will be with thee even unto the end of the, world, and through all eternity; for verily I SEAL UPON YOU YOUR EXALTATION, and prepare with Abraham your father a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, (D&C 132:49)

At this point you are probably getting pretty discouraged. You are probably wondering if the promise of eternal life is ever given to anyone besides prophets and apostles. That is a fair question. Yes, the Lord does give the promise to just common ordinary members of the church.

For almost twenty years it has been my privilege to be associated with a noble daughter of our Heavenly Father. Several years after the "born again" experience she longed in her heart to see the Lord. One day, as she was upstairs in her home praying, she saw a vision. The Lord was seated upon His throne in a room that seemed as large as eternity. She saw herself and her small children walk forward and kneel at the feet of the Master. He leaned forward, smiled and spoke to her. "Here you and your children will always be safe and you will always be given everything you ask for, because you will never ask for anything unrighteous." Life has not been easy since the promise was given, but it has been an anchor to her soul when Satan would have her believe that all was lost.

Another dear lady that lives in the same ward had a very interesting dream when only sixteen years of age. She dreamed that she and her husband (whom she had never met) were walking on a straight and narrow path in a long valley. As they walked along she noticed that many strayed from the path and became lost, but that she and her husband endured to the end and were granted eternal life. She wrote the dream down, put it away and forgot it. One day she was going through some old papers and rediscovered the message. Forty years had passed. Can you imagine the joy that she must have felt when she rediscovered this heavenly promise?

CHAPTER 18

REST

*"Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceeding GREAT MANY, who were **made pure and ENTERED into the REST of the Lord their God.**" (Alma 13:12)*

To enter into the rest of the Lord is one of the greatest experiences that can happen to a person while immortality. In fact we have been commanded to seek after this experience.

*And **seek the FACE of the Lord always**, that in patience ye may possess your souls. (D&C 101:38)*

The Lord has given us the proper sequence as follows:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that EVERY SOUL who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall SEE MY FACE and KNOW that I am. (D&C 93:1)

There are some other things that help prepare a person to see the face of the Lord. To see the Lord is to receive the Second Comforter. A person should seek to receive the First Comforter before he embarks on a program to receive the Second Comforter. The Holy Ghost, which is the First Comforter, grants a remission of sins and sanctifies the individual. What is the purpose of sanctification?

Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they MIGHT BEHOLD THE FACE OF GOD. (D&C 84:23)

Now listen to the definition of "rest" in the next verse.

*But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, **which REST is the FULLNESS OF HIS GLORY.** (D&C 84:24)*

The Lord became extremely unhappy with the people in the days of Moses. They hardened their hearts. They just didn't want to see the Lord. Can you imagine anyone not wanting to see the Lord? The Lord wants us to want to see Him, in fact, He asks us to do that very thing. Our lives should be such a reflection of the life of the Master that we should be able to look upon Him even in His glory. The people in the days of Enoch were just this kind of people. They wanted to see the Lord. Satan didn't want that to happen so he embroiled them in war.

And so great was the faith of Enoch, that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the EARTH TREMBLED, and the MOUNTAINS fled, even according to his command; and the RIVERS OF WATER WERE TURNED out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard in the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him.

....And from that time forth there were WARS AND BLOODSHED among them; but THE LORD CAME and dwelt with his people, and THEY DWELT IN RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Moses 7:13,16)

Satan attempted to destroy the City of Enoch. In spite of the war his people dwelt in righteousness. Because of this the Lord came and made His abode with them. How would

you like to live in a city where the was Lord personally present? Perhaps He might even pay a visit to your home. You would be on your good behavior, wouldn't you?

In a great vision Enoch was also shown,

... Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever. (Moses 7:21)

Enoch was then shown the destroyer. His angels were rejoicing. The earth was veiled in his power. The rest of the people were at his mercy. He prepared them for the greatest baptism in the history of the world - the baptism of the whole earth -- the one baptism in which he could rejoice. However, there were still people on the earth who wanted to see the Lord -- that wanted to live with Him. Can you imagine how they felt when they discovered that the people of Zion had gone? This land of hope and righteousness was taken from the earth and they missed the flight. But the Lord knew of their plight and in one of the most infinite acts of mercy, outside of His atonement, He sent angels to the earth to rescue them.

And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son: and the HOLY GHOST fell on MANY, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven unto Zion. (Moses 7:27)

They too were permitted to see the Lord.

Perhaps the second greatest group of people that ever lived on the earth were the Nephites who were spared from the great destruction at the time of the crucifixion. The people who were spared were all permitted to see the Lord in His glory. When He appeared, He said:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world. And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. (III Nephi 11:10,11)

The multitude, remembering the prophecies concerning this event, fell to the earth and then the Lord instructed them:

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and feet, that ye may KNOW that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world. And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come. (III Nephi 11:14, 15)

Many individuals have been permitted to see the Lord in addition to the many who saw Him in Enoch's day and the many who saw Him during His visit to the Americas. Isaiah was one of them. Listen to his testimony.

In the year that king Uzziah died I SAW ALSO THE LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (Isaiah 6:1)

This made Isaiah uncomfortable. He sorrowed as the spirit of repentance came upon him. Then he said:

...Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of UNCLEAR LIPS, and I dwell in the midst of a people of UNCLEAR LIPS; for mine eyes have SEEN THE KING, the Lord of hosts. (Isaiah 6:5)

Rest

Isaiah's conscience was quickened. He remembered things that he and the people had spoken, things that were displeasing to the Lord. The Lord recognized his feelings of guilt and took action to remove them.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (Isaiah 6:6-8)

Not only did Isaiah see the Lord but he received forgiveness of his sins in the same experience. He also volunteered to serve the Lord. This experience represented the same thing that happened to Enos in the Book of Mormon. (Enos)

Another individual who was permitted to see the Lord was the brother of Jared. He and his people had built eight vessels in which they were to cross the ocean, but they had a slight problem. The vessels were constructed in such a manner that no light could get into them. They didn't want to attempt the crossing without light. The brother of Jared made sixteen small stones. He then asked the Lord to touch them so they would give light. I'll bet Thomas A. Edison never thought of that method. So great was the faith of the brother of Jared, when the Lord touched the stones, the brother of Jared saw His finger. Then the Lord showed him His spirit body and stated:

Behold, this body, which YE NOW BEHOLD, is the body of my spirit and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh. (Ether 3:16)

Do you remember the testimony which Lehi gave near the end of his life? He wanted his family to understand that he had seen the Lord, and that the keeping of His statutes was vital.

But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have BEHELD HIS GLORY, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love. (II Nephi 1:15)

Lehi admonished his son Jacob, near this same period of time, and reminded him that he, Jacob, had also seen the Lord.

And thou HAST BEHELD IN THY YOUTH HIS GLORY; wherefore, thou art blessed even as they unto whom he shall minister in the flesh; for the Spirit is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And the way is prepared from the fall of man, and salvation is free. (II Nephi 2:4)

Another person who was permitted to see the Lord in his youth was the prophet Mormon. The experience happened when he was only fifteen years of age.

And I, being fifteen years of age and being somewhat of sober mind, therefore I WAS VISITED OF THE LORD, and tasted and knew of the goodness of Jesus. (Mormon 1:15)

The opening of this dispensation started when a young Joseph Smith was permitted to see the Lord and our Father in Heaven.

When the light rested upon me I SAW TWO PERSONAGES, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name, and said, pointing to the other --This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him. (Joseph Smith 2:17)

One of the strongest testimonies ever recorded on this subject was the testimony of Moroni:

Rest

And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

And then shall ye know THAT I HAVE SEEN JESUS, and that he hath talked with me FACE TO FACE, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things. And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing. And now, I would COMMEND YOU TO SEEK THIS JESUS of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever. Amen. (Ether 12:38-41)

What I have attempted to show is that the Lord is pleased with us when we desire to see Him. He wants us to live his commandments that we might be able to see Him. This should be one of the primary goals of the Latter-Day Saints. It is not an experience that is limited to prophets and apostles. It is open to everyone who will qualify. The Lord said to Joseph Smith:

He that seeketh me early shall find me, and shall not be forsaken. (D&C 88:83)

It is obvious that many of the prophets sought the Lord early in life and did find Him. Others saw Him later in life. For those of us that have passed that time in our lives and have not as yet found Him, perhaps we could seek Him "early" in the morning, and still find Him. It is in the early part of the day when we have fresh minds, spirits and bodies -- when we can really receive inspiration from our Heavenly Father.

To enter into the "rest" of the Lord should be one of the most important goals for any Latter-Day Saint. You'll get plenty of opposition, but the Lord is on your side. With that kind of support how can you lose?

CHAPTER 19

OPPOSITION AND PRAISE

"By him therefore let us offer the SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO GOD continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name."¹¹ (Heb 13:15)

Anyone who embarks on the path that has been suggested in the previous chapters is going to run into some stiff opposition, but the experience that you gain will be priceless. Great orators always speak from experience. One reason they are so interesting and compelling is that they have experienced what they are talking about. They feel every part of the speech or sermon. They have lived the very thing in which they are talking about. You can talk theory all day and never gain a listener, but when you are capable of talking from personal experience the whole scene changes.

Since before the creation of this earth some have obeyed truth and some have obeyed error. Satan took it upon himself to oppose God's plan. Others supported God's plan. Thus we found ourselves in a system of constant conflict. Do I follow Satan into the paths of wickedness or do I follow the Lord into the paths of holiness? When we finally make a commitment to the Lord that we will follow Him, the battle becomes extremely interesting. Satan gets angry and sends some of his most evil troops into the battle. You may lose some of the battles, but it is important that you don't lose the war. It is important that you don't surrender, that you keep fighting, that you endure to the end. The reason the atonement and repentance were provided is because the Lord knew that we would lose some of the battles. The Lord is the only one that won all the battles.

Why is it that we are in this system of opposition? Lehi taught as follows:

For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so...righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad. (II Nephi 2:11)

Apparently opposition is the catalyst that strengthens the individual. When we oppose Satan then we grow toward the Lord, but when we oppose the Lord, then we regress toward Satan.

There is one thing that we must understand. God is our Heavenly Father. He knows exactly what is best for each of us, His children. If we want to get back into God's presence, He will put us through the process necessary to get us there. If we don't, we are left much to our own way of thinking. If we had that kind of insight as earthly parents, we wouldn't make so many blunders in the rearing of our own children.

When we really get to the point of believing that our Heavenly Father knows what is best for us then we can break through into the realms of faith and hope. We know He will give us the experiences which will prepare us to come back and dwell with Him. Those experiences are not all going to be happy ones. He knows that within each of us there are character traits that have to be taken out of us. But He has promised,

Therefore, let your hearts be comforted; for all things shall work together FOR GOOD to them that WALK UPRIGHTLY, and to the sanctification of the church. (D&C 105:15)

Paul expressed it this way:

And we know that ALL THINGS work together FOR GOOD to them that LOVE GOD, to them who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

The Lord elaborated on this even further to the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Opposition And Praise

If thou art accused with all manner of false accusations; if thine enemies fall upon thee; if they tear thee from the society of thy father and mother and brethren and sisters; and if with a drawn sword thine enemies tear thee from the bosom of thy wife, and of thine offspring....

And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee.... if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, MY SON THAT ALL THESE THINGS SHALL GIVE THEE EXPERIENCE, AND SHALL BE FOR THY GOOD. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?

(D&C 122:5-8)

Very few have suffered as Joseph Smith did, but the Lord reminded him that it was for his good. Now that is hard doctrine. Sometimes we wonder if the suffering will ever end. Peter reminds us,

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are PARTAKERS OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be GLAD also with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:12,13)

It is extremely difficult to rejoice in suffering. It is like a child who has had a belt taken to him turning to the one who administered the punishment and saying, sincerely, "Thanks, I needed that." You haven't heard of that happening, have you? Why? Because the child is not convinced that the person who administered the punishment was doing it for the child's own good. That is the very same reason we don't thank, rejoice and praise the Lord for adversity when we are called to experience it. We don't trust God. We don't believe that He knows exactly what is best for us so we develop a spirit of rebellion. Sometimes it gets so bad people blame God for their problems, curse Him and die spiritually. But what have we just learned? What has the Lord told us?

And he who receiveth ALL THINGS WITH THANKFULNESS SHALL BE MADE GLORIOUS; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more. (D&C 78:19)

That's quite a promise, isn't it? But we have to be thankful for the adversity and suffering that this life brings as well as the blessings. When we get ourselves into a state of rejoicing and thankfulness, then we will be about ready for the next step. This is one that seems almost unreasonable, but it is based on the idea that the Lord knows just exactly what is best for each of His children. What is it then? It is called "praise". This is perhaps the hardest. It means simply to express thanks and praise to God for the whole complicated problem, whatever it might be. Paul called it a sacrifice.

By him therefore let us offer the SACRIFICE OF PRAISE to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. (Heb 13:15)

Do you begin to see why it is a sacrifice? Most of us would find it easier to double our tithing or fast offerings, or both, than to go before the Lord and give him thanks and praise for an extremely difficult situation. Yet that is exactly what He expects us to do. He wants us to acknowledge to Him, "Father, you did the right thing. You did what was best for all concerned." It is difficult to do that while going through the suffering, but oftentimes we come to that condition after the adversity has passed and admit it to ourselves. But even then we find it difficult to admit it to our Heavenly Father. We just don't like to admit that He knows what is best for us. To go to Him and praise Him for a bad situation is almost beyond belief. However, that is what the Lord expects us to do. Do you think that our loving Heavenly Father would allow one thing to happen to us that would not be for our good?

What does the Lord expect us to do in a difficult situation? First, He wants us to acknowledge His hand in the situation. He said to the Prophet Joseph Smith,

Opposition And Praise

And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who obey not his commandments and CONFESS NOT HIS HAND IN ALL THINGS. (D&C 59:21)

Second, He wants us to be thankful and give Him honor and praise even in the difficult situations of life because He knows what is best for us. Yes, every trial, tribulation, heartache and sorrow is designed to purify. King Benjamin's angelic message told us,

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever and ever unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, SUBMISSIVE, MEEK, HUMBLE, PATIENT, FULL OF LOVE, willing to SUBMIT to all things which the Lord seeth fit to INFLICT upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

Paul, the Apostle, was one that not only understood this doctrine, he experienced the doctrine. While in the city of Thyatira there was a damsel possessed with the spirit of divination that was making her masters much money. She followed Paul around harassing him and testifying that he was a servant of the Most High and that he was showing the way of salvation. Even though she was testifying the truth, Paul discerned that this was an evil spirit so he cast the spirit out. This put the damsel's masters out of business and made them very unhappy.

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers.

And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. (Acts 16:19-24)

How did Paul and Silas react to this difficult situation? The normal reaction would be one of discouragement and total frustration. How were they going to get to Macedonia now? Why didn't the Lord warn them? After all, were they not in the service of the Master? Why did the Lord allow this to happen to them? Doubt and fear could have taken hold of them and they could have complained bitterly to the Lord, but they were men of faith and they did not complain against the Lord. Even in a Roman prison they did not resort to that, but there was something that they did do. Now remember, they were beaten before they were thrown into prison and their feet were fast in the stocks. They couldn't move around, but they decided to hold a prayer service. The time was midnight. The rest of the prisoners were asleep. Can you imagine what kind of a stir that would cause? Paul and Silas didn't seem to care.

And at midnight Paul and Silas PRAYED, and SANG PRAISES unto God: and the prisoners heard them. (Acts 16:25)

They probably didn't feel like praying and singing praises to God, but that is what they did. They trusted the Lord even then. They knew that the Lord had done what was best for them even if it was to put them in prison. How did the Lord react to the songs of praise and prayer?

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed. (Acts 16:26)

What do you think would have happened if Paul and Silas had complained to the Lord? Probably nothing. That is about as much as the Lord does for us when we sink into the depths of despair because of a difficult problem.

The doors of the prison were now open. They were loosed from the stocks. What an opportunity to escape, but they didn't. They just continued the prayer meeting and invited the jailor to participate.

And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. (Acts 16:27-33)

What do we learn from the above account?

Our Heavenly Father KNOWS WHAT IS BEST FOR ALL OF US;
BE THANKFUL FOR DIFFICULTIES;
PRAISE GOD FOR ADVERSITY; and
TRUST HIM.

CHAPTER 20

THE FORGIVING ATTITUDE

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt 6:14, 15)

To be able to forgive another is something that takes place in the recesses of the mind. It requires little or no physical effort. It is an attitude -- one that is absolutely essential if we are to live the gospel of Jesus Christ. To develop a forgiving attitude is extremely important. Why? Because if we don't, all of the gospel ordinances can be canceled. Baptism is for the remission of sins, but the Lord has said that if we are not willing to forgive those who have trespassed against us, then He will not forgive us our transgressions against Him. If we have hard feelings against anyone, an unforgiving attitude, then our baptism is not valid. It may as well have been performed by someone who didn't have the proper authority.

If our baptism is not valid due to an unforgiving attitude then what about our eternal marriage covenant which took place in the house of the Lord? Can it possibly be valid if our baptismal ordinance isn't?

Being offended is what necessitates having to forgive. If we never are offended then we never have to forgive. Life is made up of a system of action and interaction between individuals, organizations and governments. The possibilities of injustice or alleged injustice are numberless; therefore the possibilities of being offended are about like the number of stars in the heavens. If a person decides to specialize in being offended, his soul will fill with hate, anger, resentment and despair. Although these are the outward manifestations of offense the underlying problem is really a LACK OF FAITH IN GOD.

The opportunities to forgive are unlimited. Peter understood this well when he asked of the Master,

...Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. (Matt 18:21, 22)

Technically that's 490 times, but I believe that the Lord is saying that we should forgive always. It's like a mathematical equation. Both sides must be balanced. We should be willing to forgive the number of times that we are offended.

TIMES OFFENDED = TIMES WE MUST FORGIVE

Jesus continued His instructions as follows:

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.

But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his Lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (Matt 18:23-26)

This relationship represents the one which each of us has with the King who is our Heavenly Father. It represents the debt that we owe to Him. Has He not provided the earth, the air, the water and made the conditions favorable for each of us? How much do we owe Him? We owe Him a considerable amount -- ten thousand talents.

The Forgiving Attitude

Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.

But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their Lord all that was done.

Then his Lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

*Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?
(Matt 18:27-33)*

This represents the relationship that we have with each other. The debts are very small that we owe each other. The Lord said to his servant, "If you will forgive the small debt you are owed I'll forgive the large debt that you owe to me." If the servant that owed the large debt had understood the consequences perhaps he would have been more forgiving for,

And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should PAY ALL THAT WAS DUE UNTO HIM.

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. (Matt 18:34-35)

It begins to become apparent that when we desire a blessing from the Lord the inability to forgive can cause the Lord to withhold the blessing. It can also cause our faith to become inoperable. We begin to feel guilty and our faith vanishes. If we are to develop a healthy relationship with the Master, we must forgive our neighbor his trespasses. The Lord made this very plain when he pointed to the difference between the law of Moses and the new law which He brought.

Ye had heard that it hath been said by them of old time that, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment of God.

But I say unto you, that whosoever is ANGRY WITH HIS BROTHER, shall be in danger of HIS judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, or if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there REMEMBEREST THAT THY BROTHER HATH AUGHT AGAINST THEE, Leave thou thy gift before the altar, and go thy way UNTO THY BROTHER, and FIRST BE RECONCILED TO THY BROTHER, and THEN come and offer thy gift. (Matt 5:23-26 Inspired Version)

That's difficult doctrine, for most of us, but the Lord made it very plain. If we come to offer our tithes, fast offerings or any other gifts to the Lord and our hearts are filled with anger, hatred, revenge or bitterness toward any of our brothers or sisters, then the gift will not be acceptable to the Lord. Most of us go right ahead and offer the gift hoping that we can buy the Lord off, but that isn't the way it works. After all, it is difficult to straighten out years of bitterness and resentment. When we finally develop the courage through fasting and prayer to do it the way the Lord describes, then years of unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment can be swept away. We can then come to harmony with each other and thus be prepared to become one with the Lord.

The inability to forgive is one of the most damaging things that can happen to the character and personality of an individual. From this inability is spawned anger, hatred, revenge, bitterness, resentment and the attitude that "he got just what he deserved".

The Forgiving Attitude

Economically it causes loss of employment, slowdowns in production, and even sabotage. In the home it causes tension, run-away youth and divorce. In the church it causes jealousy, distrust, anger, apathy and apostasy. It is like some kind of monster that feeds on itself. People actually reach the point where they begin to feed on evil. They actually begin to enjoy the hatred and revenge as they rush headlong toward the "great and terrible day of the Lord." For people who are in this condition perhaps this experience will help. The story was told this way:

Two men, both active members of the church, over the years developed a real antagonism toward each other. It appeared to each that the other was at fault, but neither made any attempt to correct the situation. Each time they had occasion to be near the other in any relationship of any kind the tension increased. Each seemed to go out of their way to hurt the other one. They lived in the same ward, but they studiously avoided each other when in the house of the Lord, but the tension and hatred were there. Yes, they even brought it to church with them. One would use one exit and one the other. This condition existed and grew worse and worse over a period of fifteen years. None of the teachings of the church seemed to enter into their hardened hearts, but they continued to be active in the church. Hate fed on hate, bitterness on bitterness and revenge on revenge as the condition worsened. After a period of fifteen years the Lord finally tired of the situation. One day the Lord, through the power of the Holy Ghost, spoke to one of the individuals. He said that the Lord said to him, "It's time for you to CONFESS your sins." That was new doctrine to him, but he decided he had better obey. He selected a place of privacy in his own home and got down on his knees to pray. In his thoughts he went back to the time when he was eight years of age and began to dredge up the sins of his past life and confess them to the Lord in detail. He didn't know that CONFESSION OF SINS was part of repentance. He thought that belonged to some other church. It took a lot of praying to get through the whole list of sins. And it got extremely difficult when it reached the point of hating this particular brother, but he did it. He said, "Lord, I hate my own brother. I've hated him for a long time, but you may as well know that I still hate him. I know that makes me a hypocrite, but I hate him anyway and I can't get the hate out of my system." Well, this confession was given to the Lord, but the Lord didn't accept it. The next day he went to the Lord in prayer and did it all over again. This time the Lord reminded him of some sins which he had forgotten. So he added them to the confession list. The Lord didn't accept this confession either. He still wasn't relieved of this burden -- the inability to forgive. He sought the Lord again in prayer and went through the whole sordid mess again. Again the Lord dredged up some old sins that had been forgotten -- some that were important enough to keep him from the full effects of the atonement. He confessed them to the Lord. The Lord still didn't accept the confession, but he was unaware of that anyway. He didn't even know why he was confessing them to the Lord other than he had been instructed to do so. Two days later he decided to confess again but this time the Holy Ghost came upon him in power. He described the burning love of God which he felt -- the voice of the Spirit saying to him, "You have received a remission of your sins." But there was one thing of which he seemed to be certain. All of the BITTERNESS, HATRED, REVENGE and RESENTMENT which he had had for that particular individual was gone. Not only was it gone, it was replaced with LOVE. He had heard it taught that repentance was a gift from God, but now he knew it was. He had been absolutely unable to overcome this hatred, but in an instant the Lord had taken it out of his system and replaced it with love. He no longer hated the man. He loved him. Remember the words of the Master:

My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened. Wherefore, I say unto you, that YE OUGHT TO FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER: for he that FORGIVETH NOT HIS BROTHER HIS TRESPASSES standeth condemned before the Lord: FOR THERE REMAINETH IN HIM THE GREATER SIN. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of YOU, IT IS REQUIRED to FORGIVE ALL MEN. (D&C 64:8-10)

If you have a problem with forgiveness, your faith in the Lord should surely be equal to that problem now. If you' 11 go back and review the chapters entitled "The Lord's Part in Repentance" and "The Remission of Sins", perhaps y ou'll see it more clearly. If you have had trouble forgiving, why not do as the man did in the above story, and let the Lord handle it for you. **After all, NOTHING is impossible to Him. Do you believe that?**

CHAPTER 21

MERCY, JUSTICE AND JUDGMENT

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, NEITHER ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so ARE MY WAYS HIGHER THAN YOUR WAYS, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8, 9)

Let us use an analogy. Suppose that we assign a task to one of our children. The task is to be completed before we return. When we return we discover that the task has not been completed. It then comes within our right as a parent to administer justice. The child may not like the justice that we administer but that doesn't matter. The child may realize that he is in a difficult situation and so he jumps up and gets moving. When this happens we usually extend mercy. The Lord operates on much the same principle. He extends mercy to the repentant. He extends total justice to the unrepentant. But the sins and mistakes of the repentant must be paid for by someone. That Someone is the Lord Jesus Christ. His atonement covers the repentant. It does not cover the unrepentant except to grant a resurrection which is a free gift to all regardless of conduct. Amulek testified in this manner:

And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of MERCY, WHICH OVERPOWERETH JUSTICE, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

And thus MERCY can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, WHILE HE THAT EXERCISES NO FAITH UNTO REPENTANCE IS EXPOSED TO THE WHOLE LAW OF THE DEMANDS OF JUSTICE: therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have MERCY upon you; Yea, cry unto him for MERCY. (Alma 34:15-18)

Isaiah said it this way:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have MERCY upon him; and to our God, for he will ABUNDANTLY PARDON. (Isaiah 55:7)

If we choose to exercise faith unto repentance then mercy comes into play. Mercy actually can overpower justice. The opposite is true also. Justice can overpower mercy if we do not repent. Then we are exposed to the full effects of the law. This was made very plain to Martin Harris, and the principle applies to all. In that revelation the Lord said:

And surely every man must repent or SUFFER, for I, God am endless...

Therefore I command you to repent -- repent, lest I SMITE you by the rod of my mouth, and by my WRATH, and by my ANGER, and your SUFFERINGS BE SORE -- how sore you know not, how EXQUISITE YOU KNOW NOT, YEA, HOW HARD TO BEAR YOU KNOW NOT.

For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that THEY MIGHT NOT SUFFER IF THEY WOULD REPENT: But if they would not repent they MUST SUFFER even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink-- Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I HUMBLE YOU WITH MY ALMIGHTY POWER; and that you confess your sins, lest you SUFFER these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit.... And MISERY thou shalt receive if thou wilt slight these counsels, yea, even the DESTRUCTION OF THYSELF AND PROPERTY. (D&C 19:4, 15-20, 33)

There is a vast amount of difference between the judgment of man and God. God's judgment is just. It is perfect. It is infallible. Man's judgment may be just, and it may not. It may vary from almost total justice to total injustice with any number of infinite gradations in between.

One day the Master was accused of violating the sabbath by healing someone. He spoke to His accusers and said:

Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgement. (John 7:24)

On another occasion the Lord was teaching in the temple.

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

This they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him.

But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.

So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?

She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. (John 8:3-10)

Although the Lord's judgment in this case played havoc with the law of Moses, we see the Lord's compassion and mercy carried out. Where did such wisdom come from? How could the Lord demonstrate such judgment? In the same chapter He gave us the clue.

Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I DO NOTHING OF MYSELF: but as MY FATHER HATH TAUGHT ME, I SPEAK THESE THINGS. (John 8:28)

Apparently the Lord didn't make the judgment. The judgment apparently came from the Father through a process of revelation. Is it any wonder that He was perfect? If this is the principle upon which the Master operated, can we operate on a better one?

Now that the Master has been resurrected and received His celestial glory, judgment has been given into His hands. However, He has at various times commissioned people on the earth with that responsibility, but with a string attached. You see, judgment in the Lord's kingdom must be perfect. How do we administer it perfectly? Very simply. The same way in which the Lord administered it. To the Nephite twelve He said:

And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, ACCORDING TO THE JUDGMENT WHICH I SHALL GIVE UNTO YOU, which shall be JUST. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, EVEN AS I AM. (III Nephi 27:27)

Did you see the string attached? The twelve were to be judges, but they had to get the judgment from the Lord the same as He had to get it from the Father when He was in the flesh.

The next question that arises is who is to be judged? The Lord answered that question to the Prophet Joseph:

Mercy, Justice And Judgment

And him that REPENTETH NOT of his sins , and CONFESSETH THEM NOT, ye shall BRING BEFORE THE CHURCH, and do with him as the scripture saith unto you, either by COMMANDMENT or by REVELATION.

And this ye shall do that God may be glorified not because ye forgive not, having not compassion, but that ye may be justified in the eyes of the law, that ye may not offend him who is your lawgiver-- (D&C 64:12,13)

But what of a repentant sinner who comes before the church? Alma was given instructions on that subject. The Lord said to him,

Therefore I say unto you, Go; and WHOSOEVER TRANSGRESSETH AGAINST ME, him shall ye judge according to the sins which he has committed: and IF

*HE CONFESS HIS SINS BEFORE THEE
AND ME*

*AND REPENTETH IN THE SINCERITY OF HIS HEART,
HIM SHALL YE FORGIVE,*

and I WILL FORGIVE HIM ALSO. (Mosiah 26:29)

Surely the above repentance could only be discerned through the Spirit of the Lord. Perhaps these requirements must be met more than once in a person's life for the Lord added:

Yea, and as OFTEN AS MY PEOPLE REPENT will I forgive them their trespasses against me. (Mosiah 26:30)

As for the unrepentant, the Lord concluded:

Go, and whosoever will not repent of his sins the same shall NOT BE NUMBERED AMONG MY PEOPLE; and this shall be observed from this time forward. (Mosiah 26:32)

PART III

A summary of important principles concerning this vital change.

CHAPTER 22

THE DIVINE LAWS OF LOVE - OUR PRIME DIRECTIVES

In our view love is the common component in every aspect of the Gospel, including reestablishing a Zion society. The best known of the many scriptures that give us the divine laws of love involve, of all people, a lawyer (scribe). We have two versions of the incident. Matthew gives us the short version, thusly:

Matt. 22:34-39 But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Mark gives us the more detailed version which, among other things, tells us that the lawyer already knew the answer to his question and that, therefore, these divine laws of love were already known to and understood by at least the thoughtful Israelites. We also learn that once upon a time there was at least one lawyer who was close to getting it right.

Mark 12:28-34. And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and having perceived that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

29 And Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment

31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any questions.

We begin our comments, oddly enough, in the premortal spirit realm. After we were each organized by our heavenly parents from what the scriptures call "intelligence" we dwelt with our parents in Heaven. There we were instructed by them and by others in all things that were necessary for us to know in order to accomplish all that was possible there towards becoming perfect like them. Certainly the emphasis there was also on love.

Because of our perfect intellectual knowledge of these truths in the premortal existence and because nothing imperfect can be in Father's presence, it was not possible for us to know there whether at our core we had fully learned, understood and could properly apply these great principles of love. Thus, Father proposed and we agreed to this great experience here where we would have an opportunity to choose good over evil and to experience the consequences of those choices in order to be PROVED and learn for ourselves. For that reason we come into this world where we basically start over with just our eternal character. A veil is purposefully drawn over our minds so that we forget our past experiences. There is much truth to the saying that circumstances do not make character, but only reveal it. In an

eternal sense, Shakespeare was speaking a great truth when he said "All the world is a stage", for truly this world is only a temporary stage on which to conduct this great learning process.

Although this world with its problems and challenges is terribly real at the moment, that which has lasting, eternal import is the choices we make and the attitudes and attributes of character that we develop, or uncover, because that is all we take with us when we leave here. One of the strongest lessons taught in this world is the power and worth of love, for each of us to a greater or lesser extent learns by experience that love in personal relationships or the lack thereof is the source of our greatest happiness and greatest sorrow.

Hence, the great theme unifying Father's plan of progression towards perfection is love of both our Father and each other. In fact, these divine laws of love are so essential that to me they basically define two other concepts important to our growth and progression towards perfection, those two concepts being "sin" and "repentance". As I have struggled to understand exactly what "sin" is, I have come to the view that sin is any act which is inconsistent with or in violation of the two great commandments to love God and to love each other. And repentance, which basically means to change our mind, thoughts, or spirit, I see as the name given to the process of changing our thoughts and actions from those that are inconsistent with these two laws of love to acts that are consistent with those laws.

To me not only do these laws define the concepts of sin and repentance but they essentially define at least the most important aspect of perfection itself as that term is applied to us in most places in the scriptures. Specifically, I believe that an individual whose thoughts and actions are in full harmony with those principles is fundamentally perfect since that attribute underlays all the other attributes such as patience, kindness, etc. mentioned in the scriptures as divine attributes.

The first reason I see why these laws of love are our "prime directives" is because every person on this planet is His son or daughter. I too am a father and one of the things that upsets me the most is squabbling, fighting, anger, etc. among my children. In addition to doing everything I know how to do to get my children to understand the need to not only get along with one another but to really love one another I also want them to learn to share and be fair with one another. And I strive to do this because I know that as a family our own joy and happiness is greatest when there is a maximum of love and harmony among each of the family members.

The day I saw the parallel between my purpose as a father and what Heavenly Father asks of us just happened to be after refereeing a squabble among my children that particularly upset me. As I pondered over why I was so upset I suddenly saw the parallel; it was one large "AH HA!" for me. It astonishes me that it took me more than thirty years to really understand through my experience something that had been right in front of my nose all that time. I had intellectually understood for some time that Heavenly Father's entire plan exists only to enable or empower us to return along with our loved ones to live with our divine parents and their eldest son, Jesus Christ, in the Celestial Kingdom, a realm of love and beauty, as a family of perfected men and women enjoying a perfect love and carrying on the unending work of organizing and perfecting others. Nonetheless, at that moment I came to a much deeper understanding of why Father's kingdom is one of pure, perfect love and beauty, and the most important of the divine and eternal laws which we must come to accept, understand and apply is to love our Father in Heaven and each other and then act accordingly in all things.

One other thought on another "why." Clearly neither knowledge nor capabilities either alone or combined are what perfection is all about, for Lucifer, who had a full knowledge and presumably virtually full capabilities as one of Father's right hand assistants in the pre-mortal existence, blew it all when he rebelled against Father and with his knowledge and great capabilities succeeding in attracting to his cause a full one third of all of Father's children, who themselves apparently had great knowledge and capabilities far beyond those we now possess in this world. Concerning the tests of this world we are told

that all will be fully tested even as Abraham was tested - and clearly Abraham's test of whether he would do all that Father asked and sacrifice what to his knowledge was the only son and child he would ever have was a truly awesome test. Abraham's test was for me a test of the strength, or dependability of his love for Father. By becoming perfect or godlike and acquiring all the Father hath, we acquire among other things all of the capacities and capabilities of God with which immense harm and damage could be done, along the lines of what Lucifer has done, if we ever, for any reason did not act selflessly in all things in total harmony with these laws of love.

As I came to see these reasons for our divinely given prime directives I saw more clearly why these laws underlay or were the reasons for everything else that Heavenly Father has asked us to do. And, I understood better why Moroni's great statements on faith, hope and charity are the sum and substance of the Gospel. Let's read again the final portion of these oh so choice verses:

Moroni 7:44 ... for none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

45 And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

46 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail -

47 But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath BESTOWED upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen

I understood why the entire purpose of the earth is foiled without the sealing ordinances of the gospel:

D&C 138:46-48 And Malachi, the prophet who testified of the coming of Elijah - of whom also Moroni spake to the Prophet Joseph Smith, declaring that he should come before the ushering in of the great and dreadful day of the Lord - were also there.

47 The Prophet Elijah was to plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to their fathers.

48 Foreshadowing the great work to be done in the temples of the Lord in the dispensation of the fulness of times, for the redemption of the dead, and the sealing of the children to their parents, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse and utterly wasted at his coming.

I more easily understood why on the economic aspects of life Heavenly Father has given the following to us as His will.

D&C 104:11-18 *It is wisdom in me; therefore, a commandment I give unto you, that ye shall organize yourselves and appoint every man his stewardship;*

12 That every man may give an account unto me of the stewardship which is appointed unto him.

13 For it is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures.

14 I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine.

15 And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine.

16 But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low.

17 For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I have prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves.

18 Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment.

D&C 49:20 But it is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.

D&C 78:3-6 For verily I say unto you, the time has come, and is now at hand; and behold, and lo, it must needs be that there be an organization of my people, in regulating and establishing the affairs of the storehouse for the poor of my people, both in this place and in the land of Zion -

4 For a permanent and everlasting establishment and order unto my church, to advance the cause, which you have espoused, to the salvation of man, and to the glory of your Father who is in heaven;

5 That you may be equal in the bonds of heavenly things, yea, and earthly things also, for the obtaining of heavenly things.

6 For if ye are not equal in earthly things ye cannot be equal in obtaining heavenly things;

7 For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you.

D&C 70:14 Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld.

I also understood how unity, which is a major requirement of the Lord for many blessings, naturally flows from following these principles. Consider the following revelation.

D&C 38:24-27 And let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before me.

25 And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself.

26 For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them, and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other; Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there - and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just?

27 Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one, ye are not mine.

Listen now as the Lord explains the blessings that naturally follow those who obey with full purpose of heart the preceding principles. It sounds exactly like the desires I have and the blessings I would wish for each one of my own children.

D&C 82:16-24 Behold, here is wisdom also in me for your good.

17 And you are to be equal, or in other words, you are to have equal claim on the properties, for the benefit of managing the concerns of your stewardships, every man according to his wants and his needs, inasmuch as his wants are just -

18 And all this for the benefit of the church of the living God, that every man may gain other talents, yea, even an hundred fold, to be cast into the Lord's storehouse, to become the common property of the whole church -

19 Every man seeking the interest of his neighbor, and doing all things with an eye single to the glory of God.

20 This order I have appointed to be an everlasting order unto you, and unto your successors, inasmuch as you sin not.

21 And the soul that sins against this covenant, and hardeneth his heart against it, shall be dealt with according to the laws of my church, and shall be delivered over to the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.

22 *And now, verily I say unto you, and this is wisdom, make unto yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, and they will not destroy you.*

23 *Leave judgment alone with me, for it is mine and I will repay. Peace be with you; my blessings continue with you.*

24 *For even yet the kingdom is yours, and shall be forever, if you fall not from your steadfastness. Even so, Amen.*

Now, having thoughtfully considered the preceding words of Lord to the us, and being mindful that none of those principles were fully or even substantially followed, perhaps you can more fully appreciate just why the Lord is so clearly unhappy and says what He does in these next verses from D&C 101. Because the preamble is helpful to a fuller understanding we include it as well.

Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Kirtland, Ohio, December 16, 1833. HC 1:458-464. At this time the saints who had gathered in Missouri were suffering great persecution. Mobs had driven them from their homes in Jackson County, and some of them had tried to establish themselves in Van Buren County, but persecution followed them. The main body of the saints was at that time in Clay County, Missouri. Threats of death against individuals of the Church were many. The people had lost household furniture, clothing, livestock, and other personal property, and many of their crops had been destroyed.

Verily, I say unto you, concerning your brethren who have been afflicted, and persecuted, and cast out from the land of their inheritance -

2 I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their own transgressions.

3 Yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels.

4 Therefore, they must needs be chastened and tried, even as Abraham who was commanded to offer up his only son.

*5 **For all those who will not endure chastening, but deny me, cannot be sanctified.***

*6 Behold, I say unto you, there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires among them; therefore **by these things they polluted their inheritances.***

7 They were slow to hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God; therefore, the Lord their God is slow to hearken unto their prayers, to answer them in the day of their trouble.

8 In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me.

Now read carefully the following portions of D&C 105 which to me are an excellent summary of the entire subject of the Lord's will for economic matters among the Saints and what is required for it to occur.

D&C 105:2-6, 9-14, 31-33. Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now.

*3 But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and **do not impart of their substance, as becometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them;***

*4 **And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom;***

*5 **And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom;** otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself.*

6 And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer.

...

9 Therefore, in consequence of the transgressions of my people, it is expedient in me that mine elders should wait for a little season for the redemption of Zion -

10 That they themselves may be prepared, and that my people may be taught more perfectly, and have experience, and know more perfectly concerning their duty, and the things which I require at their hands.

11 And **this cannot be brought to pass until mine elders are endowed with power from on high.**

12 For behold, **I have prepared a great endowment and blessing to be poured out upon them**, inasmuch as they are faithful and continue in humility before me.

13 Therefore it is expedient in mine eyes that mine elders should wait for a little season, for the redemption of Zion.

14 For behold, I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfill - I will fight their battles.

...

31 But first let my army become very great, **and let it be SANCTIFIED before me**, that it may become fair as the sun, and clear as the moon, and that her banners may be terrible unto all nations;

32 That the kingdoms of this world may be constrained to acknowledge that the kingdom of Zion is in very deed the kingdom of our God and his Christ; therefore, let us become subject unto her laws.

33 Verily I say unto you, it is expedient in mine eyes that the first elders should receive their endowment from on high in my house, which I have commanded to be built unto my name in the land of Kirtland.

Hopefully you are aware of the unprecedented spiritual outpouring that occurred during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple. During those events it appears from this revelation and from the records of the events that during those unforgettable days many became sanctified through the baptism of fire.

And, finally, I understood much more clearly that when our hearts are changed and filled with the pure love of Christ so that we care more for the welfare of others than we do ourselves, then, and only then, these principles will be willingly followed by all out of love. Only when this happens can a true Zion society occur and endure. Note the essential aspects of the true Zion Society as summarized in the following well known scripture.

Moses 7:18. And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

To date, there is no ground for disputing that the Lord's economic standard is one that as a people we simply have not met; nor is that failure due to a lack of understanding. As both Hugh Nibley in his landmark work "Approaching Zion" and President Benson have pointedly explained the Saints remain immersed in Babylon because of such divisive attitudes as pride, selfishness and greed, which attitudes can only exist in those who do not have the pure love of Christ.

The big problem with the laws of love is that as plain old "natural man" folks we simply are unable to live them. Since the Gospel was restored and the church formally organized on April 6, 1830, as a people we have experienced more than one hundred sixty years of revelations, sermons, exhortations and admonitions from Prophets and Apostles, endless reminders of our "duties", and countless lists of "shoulds" and "oughts" in innumerable hours of instruction and sermons. Yes, it has helped. We are certainly better for it. We have progressed individually and as a people. But, based on all the evidence, and as the Lord has expressly acknowledged in the above verses from Section 105, mere "head learning" or intellectual understanding is a necessary beginning but is not alone nearly enough to bring about sufficient changes in our behavior

So we now find ourselves in the situation where with our lips we can teach and mentally comprehend correct principles, but our hearts are not sufficiently changed, so our

behavior is not sufficiently changed and Zion is not yet reestablished, although the foundation has been laid since 1830.

But, we should not be too discouraged either. After all it took Enoch more than twice this number of years before his Zion was ready to be taken up. In fact, he needed some three hundred sixty five years laboring with the same people (because of their much longer life spans) and their descendants before Zion was taken up.

Based on the results from the beginning of the restoration to now, it seems fair to conclude that as a people or society we have developed about as far as we can on sermons and "shoulds" and "oughts." WE NEED SOMETHING MORE!!

Is it not plainly apparent that, in the terms of King Benjamin and his people, the something more needed is to come unto Christ, have his atoning blood applied to us that we might receive a remission sins and experience the mighty change of heart including the gift or endowment of the pure love of Christ spoken of so eloquently by Moroni?

AFTER ALL, IT WAS NEVER INTENDED THAT WE BE ABLE TO DO IT BY OURSELVES; IF WE COULD THERE WOULD BE NO NEED FOR THE SAVIOR OR HIS ATONEMENT!

CHAPTER 23

ONE MORE TIME - A REVIEW

We begin this review with four statements of the perfected, resurrected Christ directly to us in which He clearly explains exactly what His gospel is. Note how repentance is one of the prerequisite conditions for receiving the mighty change. We are also going to break out what we see as each of the elements of His gospel, in order to identify precisely what He has told us the "gospel of Jesus Christ" really is.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In the four major sections of scripture quoted below, we have indicated what we consider to be each element of the Gospel by stair step indentations and have also highlighted key words and phrases by bolder print and/or underlining.

1. We start with one of our Savior's shorter statements of His Gospel in D&C 39:1-6.

D&C 39:1-6 Hearken and listen to the voice of him who is from all eternity to all eternity, the Great I Am, even Jesus Christ

2 The light and the life of the world; - a light which shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not;

3 The same which came in the meridian of time unto mine own, and mine own received me not;

*4 **But to as many as received me, gave I power to become my sons; and even so will I give unto as many as will receive me, power to become my sons.***

5 And verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth my gospel receiveth me and he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me.

[The primary purpose of everything He has said up to this point appears to be simply to get us to PAY ATTENTION AND LISTEN.]

*6 And **THIS IS MY GOSPEL - repentance and baptism by water, and***

then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.

SUMMARY: D&C 39:6 identifies these three elements:

- repentance
- baptism by water
- the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost which showeth all things and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.

**Those who DO this, receive Christ and "have power to become my [Christ's] sons."
Those who DO NOT receive this gospel, DO NOT RECEIVE CHRIST.**

2. Next from 3 Nephi 9:13-22 are His words to the Nephites from the heavens immediately before He physically appeared to them:

*13 O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now **RETURN UNTO ME, and***

***repent of your sins, and
be converted,***

that I may heal you?

14 Yea, verily I say unto you,

if ye will **COME UNTO ME**

ye shall have eternal life.

Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and
 whosoever will come,
 him will I receive;
 and blessed are those who come unto me.

15 Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things
 that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in
 me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

16 I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming
 are fulfilled.

17 And
 as many as have received me,
 to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as
 shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law
 of Moses fulfilled.

18 I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

19 And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices shall be done
 away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

20 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 and the Holy Ghost, even as the Lam anites, because
 of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and the
 Holy Ghost, and they knew it not.

21 Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

22 Therefore, whoso
repenteth and
COMETH UNTO ME, as a little child,
 him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God.

Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again; therefore,
repent, and
COME UNTO ME ye ends of the earth,
and be saved.

SUMMARY: In 3 Nephi 9 our Lord used, sometimes several times, the following familiar
 phrases to define His Gospel:

- return unto me
- receive me/believe on my name
- repent of your sins
- be converted
- come unto me as a little child
- offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit
- be baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost

**Those who do this shall be received by Christ, are healed, are "saved", and
 become "the sons of God."**

3. The next excerpt from 3 Nephi Chapter 11 is from the very first address that He made
 to them in person beginning at verse 28:

28 And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye
 baptize.
 And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there
 be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.

29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is
 of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with
 anger, one with another.

30 Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another;
 but
this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.

32 And **THIS IS MY DOCTRINE**, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere,

to repent and believe in me.

33 And whoso

believeth in me, and is baptized,

the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

34 And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

35 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **THIS IS MY DOCTRINE**, and I bear record of it from the Father; and

whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also;

and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for **he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.**

36 And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.

37 And again I say unto you,

ye must repent, and become as a little child, and

be baptized in my name,

or ye can in nowise receive these things. ["these things" refers to the baptism of the Spirit and their effects as described in the preceding verses.]

38 And again I say unto you,

ye must repent, and

be baptized in my name, and

become as a little child,

or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **THIS IS MY DOCTRINE**, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

40 **And whoso shall declare MORE OR LESS THAN THIS and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.**

41 **THEREFORE, GO FORTH UNTO THIS PEOPLE, AND DECLARE THE WORDS WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN, UNTO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.**

SUMMARY: In Chapter 11 our Savior used the following terms to describe His Gospel

- such things (disputations) should be done away
- repent
- believe in me
- be baptized
- become as a little child
- be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost

Those who do this are "saved" and "inherit the Kingdom of God"; those who do not are "damned." "And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them."

4. And finally, 3 Nephi Chapter 27 from the Savior's parting words to his disciples before he returned to the Heavenly realms.

13 Behold I have given unto you MY GOSPEL, and **THIS IS THE GOSPEL WHICH I HAVE GIVEN UNTO YOU - that**

I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

14 And my Father sent me

that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil -

15 And for this cause have I been lifted up;

therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

16 And it shall come to pass, that whoso

repenteth and

is baptized in my name

shall be filled; and

if he endureth to the end, behold,

him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

17 HE THAT ENDURETH NOT UNTO THE END the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.

18 And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words.

19 And

no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood,

because of their faith, and

the repentance of all their sins,

and their faithfulness unto the end.

20 Now this is the commandment:

Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and

COME UNTO ME and

be baptized in my name,

that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost,

that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

21 **Verily, verily, I say unto you, THIS IS MY GOSPEL;** and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

22 Therefore, if ye do these things blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.

23 Write the things which ye have seen and heard, save it be those which are forbidden.

24 Write the works of this people, which shall be, even as hath been written, of that which hath been.

25 For behold, out of the books which have been written, and which shall be written, shall this people be judged, for by them shall their works be known unto men.

26 And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore **OUT OF THE BOOKS WHICH SHALL BE WRITTEN SHALL THE WORLD BE JUDGED.**

27 And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment that I shall give unto you, which shall be just. **Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am.**

28 And now I go unto the Father. And verily I say unto you, **WHATSOEVER THINGS YE SHALL ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME SHALL BE GIVEN UNTO YOU.**

29 **THEREFORE, ASK, AND YE SHALL RECEIVE; KNOCK, AND IT SHALL BE OPENED UNTO YOU; FOR HE THAT ASKETH, RECEIVETH; AND UNTO HIM THAT KNOCKETH, IT SHALL BE OPENED.**

SUMMARY: In Chapter 27 our Savior used the following phrases to explain the elements of his Gospel:

- I came into the world to do the will of my Father,
- that I might be lifted up upon the cross,

- that I might draw all men unto me to be judged of their works.
- faith
- repentance of all their sins
- come unto me
- be baptized in my name
- be filled (with the Holy Ghost)
- no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom
- be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost that ye may stand spotless before me
- endureth to the end/faithfulness unto the end

Those who do this shall be held "guiltless before my Father", "enter into His kingdom... [and] rest" and "stand spotless before me at the last day." **Those who do this BUT DO NOT ENDURE TO THE END shall be "hewn down and cast into the fire from which they can no more return."**

Since our focus is on the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, let's now look at only the summary statements on that from our previous summaries:

From D&C 39:6:

- the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost which showeth all things and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom.

From 3 Nephi 9:

- offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit
- be baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost

From 3 Nephi 11:

- be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost

From 3 Nephi 27:

- be filled (with the Holy Ghost)
- no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom
- be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost that ye may stand spotless before me

A similar analysis of Nephi's profound discussion of the doctrine of Christ found in 2 Nephi 31 through 2 Nephi 32:6 discloses these same elements.

According to these scriptures and our own experience, one of the predicates (or prerequisite conditions) of receiving the baptism of fire is true repentance. **The PROCESS of repentance culminates in receiving a remission of sins, which includes having the Spirit specifically tell you that your sins are forgiven, and receiving the baptism of fire. As we mentioned in the beginning chapter, the elements of repentance are something other than what is commonly understood by most members of the LDS church or ANY OF ITS OFFSHOOTS.**

Our understanding and experience is that the elements of true repentance are the following.

CONFESSION AND THE BROKEN HEART AND CONTRITE SPIRIT

In preceding chapters you have encountered our thoughts and experiences concerning confession of one's sins to Father in Heaven. We do not wish to repeat that entire discussion here but we can not emphasize strongly enough the role that confession to Father in heaven of one's sins plays in proper repentance. It has been our experience that the "broken heart and contrite spirit", which describes the experience of going down into the depths of humility, is part and parcel of that process of confessing one's sins to Heavenly Father. Concerning the "broken heart and contrite spirit" which the Savior commands us to obtain, President Benson instructed us as follows:

..., *godly sorrow is defined as a sorrow that leads us to repentance.*

Godly sorrow is a gift of the Spirit. It 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." (See 3 Ne 9:20; Moro 6:2; D&C 20:37, 59:8; Ps 34:18) 51:17: Isa 57:15.) Such a spirit is the absolute prerequisite for true repentance. "A Mighty Change of Heart", Ensign, Oct. '89, p. 4.

It seems like kind of a "Catch 22" situation that in order to receive the baptism of the spirit one has to experience a "broken heart and contrite spirit" which can only be experienced with assistance from the Spirit. However, some instances in the scriptures, such as in the following example, both elements occurred in one extended event with the first part consisting of experiences causing the godly sorrow described by President Benson.

*Mosiah 27:28-29 Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting night unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God.
29 My soul hath been redeemed from the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. I was in the darkest abyss; but now I behold the marvelous light of God. My soul was racked with eternal torment; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.*

As pointed out in earlier chapters, another important part of the process of repentance that may well occur during the process of confessing one's sins to Heavenly Father is to be prompted concerning certain actions one must take including people one must see. It is, of course, essential that one promptly obey such directions of the Spirit.

FASTING AND PRAYER

Certainly one seeking to fully repent MUST utilize these FUNDAMENTAL spiritual tools. Consider the role of fasting and prayer in the following events from the Book of Mormon.

Mosiah 27:21-26. *And he (Alma the father) caused that a multitude should be gathered together that they might witness what the Lord had done for his son, and also for those that were with him.
22 And he caused that the priests should assemble themselves together; and **they began to FAST, and to PRAY** to the Lord their God that he would open the mouth of Alma (the younger), that he might speak, and also that his limbs might receive their strength - that the eyes of the people might be opened to see and know of the goodness and glory of God.
23 And it came to pass after **they had FASTED AND PRAYED for the space of two days and two nights**, the limbs of Alma received their strength, and he stood up and began to speak unto them, bidding them to be of good comfort;
24 For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold, I am born of the spirit.
25 And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters;
26 And thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.*

Helaman 3:33-35. *And in the fifty and first year of the reign of the judges there was peace also, save it were the pride which began to enter into the church - not into the church of God, but into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God -
34 And they were lifted up in pride, even to the persecution of many of their brethren. Now this was a great evil, which did cause the more humble part of the people to suffer great persecutions, and to wade through much affliction.
35 Nevertheless they did FAST AND PRAY oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and*

consolation, and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

Alma 5:45-46. *And this is not all. Do ye not suppose that I know of things myself? Behold, I testify unto you that I do know that these things whereof I have spoken are true. And how do ye suppose that I know of their surety?*

*46 Behold, I say unto you they are made known unto me by the Holy Spirit of God. **Behold, I have FASTED AND PRAYED many days** that I might know these things of myself. And now I do know of myself that they are true; for the Lord God hath made them manifest unto me by his Holy Spirit; and this is the spirit of revelation which is in me.*

3 Nephi 12:6. *And **blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness**, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.*

Aren't you persuaded by now that this last scripture is primarily referring to fasting rather than just to desire?

As for prayer, so much has been said throughout virtually every chapter that we can hardly think of another word to add about prayer. Volumes can and have been written about prayer, some of the best we know of by George W. Pace, his most recent one being entitled "Our Search to Know the Lord." We highly recommend it. Obviously it is in deep, focused, sincere, personal conversations with Heavenly Father that every component of repentance discussed here and throughout this work is manifested.

DAILY DEVOTIONS AND THE SACRAMENT

A former Stake President, Ralph O. Bradley, taught that the following steps powerfully increased one's ability to receive the spirit: (1) daily meaningful scripture reading, (2) daily heartfelt prayers, (3) if possible regular, that is at least monthly and preferably weekly, temple attendance, and (4) loving and serving others.

To these could well be added partaking of the sacrament in a prayerful manner focusing on sincerely renewing one's baptismal covenants to remember the Savior always. The following incident from 3 Nephi tells of an occurrence when the sacrament apparently played a vital role.

3 Nep 20:3-9 And it came to pass that he (Christ) brake bread again and blessed it, and gave to the disciples to eat.

4 And when they had eaten he commanded them that they should break bread, and give unto the multitude.

5 And when they had given unto the multitude he also gave them wine to drink, and commanded that they should give unto the multitude.

6 Now, there had been no bread, neither wine, brought by the disciples, neither by the multitude;

7 But he truly gave them bread to eat, and also wine to drink.

8 And he said unto them : He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled.

9 Now, when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold, they were filled with the Spirit; and they did cry out with one voice, and gave glory to Jesus, whom they both saw and heard.

ASK AND YE SHALL RECEIVE

There are few principles more often found in the scriptures than the instruction to ask and seek of our Father in Heaven. The substance of "ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you" can be found in many dozens of different verses throughout all four scriptures from beginning to end, including James 1:5 and 3 Nephi 27:28-29 quoted earlier in this chapter. Let us look at a couple more.

One More Time - A Review

3 *Nephi 14:7-8* (the Nephite Sermon of the Mount) **Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.**

...

8 **For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.**

Mormon 9:19-21, 25, 27-28. And if there were miracles wrought then, why has God ceased to be a God of miracles and yet be an unchangeable Being? And behold, I say unto you that he changeth not; if so he would cease to be God; and he ceaseth not to be a God, and is a God of miracles;

20 And the reason why he ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust. [Would this not apply to those who ignore and refuse to obey the laws pertaining to receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost?]

21 Behold, I say unto you, you that whoso believeth in Christ, doubting nothing, **whatsoever he shall ASK the Father in the name of Christ it shall be granted him;** and this promise is unto all, even unto the ends of the earth.

...

25 And **whosoever shall believe in my name, DOUBTING NOTHING, will I confirm all my words unto him, even unto the ends of the earth.**

...

27 O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord) **and ASK the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. DOUBT NOT, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and COME UNTO THE LORD with all your heart,** and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him.

28 Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; **ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ASK with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God.**

The point is that in order to receive blessings from our Father in Heaven almost without exception we must first ask for that blessing or spiritual gift. Indeed, the entire restoration was brought about because Joseph wanted to know which church was right. And virtually every section of the Doctrine and Covenants was received in response to questions asked of the Lord.

SINCERE DESIRE

A deep, sincere desire is obviously another vital component. Note that before the twelve disciples each received their own baptism of fire,

3 *Nephi 19:9.* ... **they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.**

Consider also the following scriptures on the subject of desire.

1 *Nephi 10:17-22.* And it came to pass after I, Nephi, having heard all the words of my father, concerning the things which he saw in a vision, and also the things which he spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, which power he received by faith on the Son of God - and the Son of God was the Messiah who should come - I Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God unto all those who diligently seek him, as well in times of old as in the time that he should manifest himself unto the children of men.

18 For he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him.

19 For **he that diligently seeketh shall find;** and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore, the course of the Lord is one eternal round.

20 Therefore remember, O man, for all thy doings thou shalt be brought into judgment.

21 Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever.

22 And the Holy Ghost giveth authority that I should speak these things, and deny them not.

Moroni 7:9. And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with **real intent of heart**; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.

Heavenly Father has told us that He requires our hearts and we are judged accordingly.

3 Nephi 10:6. O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.

D&C 64:22. And after that day, I, the Lord will not hold any guilty that shall go with an open heart up to the land of Zion; for I, the Lord, require the hearts of the children of men.

D&C 137:9. For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.

Helaman 3:35. Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

Do you now have a much more complete understanding of exactly why each prophet of this dispensation from Joseph Smith to President Benson has soberly and emphatically stated that the Lord has specifically directed him to "Say nothing but repentance unto this generation."?

Would you now agree that "repent" is another word that may be added to the list of the many names for this mighty change? In fact, in each of the three scriptures below the words "repent" and "repentance" are clearly used to mean obtaining one's remission of sins.

Alma 13:30 And may the Lord grant unto you **REPENTANCE**, that ye may not bring down his wrath upon you, that ye may not be bound down by the chains of hell, that ye may not suffer the second death.

Moses 6:57 Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must **REPENT**, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.

Jacob 3:3 But, wo, wo, unto you that are not pure in heart, that are filthy this day before God; for except ye **REPENT** the land is cursed for your sakes; and the Lamanites, which are not filthy like unto you, nevertheless they are cursed with a sore cursing, shall scourge you even unto destruction.

CHAPTER 24

FINAL THOUGHTS

WHAT TO EXPECT

Based on our experience and our understanding of the scriptures, although there are some common elements, each person's change or baptism of the spirit is unique, like snowflakes or gaining a testimony. Just as no two snowflakes are alike, I have never heard a story from either a convert or born in the church member that was identical to anyone else's experience of how they came into the church or gained a testimony.

Of all the names by which this change is known throughout the scriptures the name "baptism of fire" most closely describes what it feels like for most. The experience apparently varies in intensity for each person and may last a few hours, days, or occasionally weeks. It may involve visitation(s) or vision(s). Apparently all receive the message that their sins are forgiven.

We do not know for certain why the experiences are unique to each person; however, we surmise, that, like a testimony, the Lord gives us what we need, in a way most meaningful to us, perhaps modified by what we are entitled to based on the strength of our faith and works, but this is speculation.

We do know that it is a discernible event or experience. You will definitely know that something has happened and that you are changed as a result of it.

We know of a few that have written of their personal experience of change and have included in the Appendix a few such accounts that have come to our attention. We would like to compile a collection of such experiences and make it available to others because of the extraordinary light and knowledge that usually accompanies such experiences. Whether or not that becomes possible depends on you, dear readers, specifically, whether you will write down and share such experiences with us and whether the Spirit will permit us to make them available to others.

WHAT IT IS NOT - NOT "PURIFICATION"

Although the scriptures are clear that one is sanctified through the baptism of the spirit, they also clearly indicate that this is not the end of the road. Although sin is apparently abhorrent, the possibility for straying off the path through sin is still very real for we are only at the beginning of the path rather than at its end. We quote again a couple of verses from 2 Nephi 31 previously quoted in Chapter 2 to emphasize the point that by experiencing this mighty change we have only just entered the gate into the strait and narrow path.

2 Nephi 31:17-18 Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might KNOW THE GATE by which ye should ENTER. For THE GATE by which ye should ENTER is repentance and baptism by water; that then cometh a remissions of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

18 And THEN are ye in this strait and narrow path which LEADS to eternal life; yea, ye have ENTERED IN BY THE GATE; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye ENTERED IN by the way ye should receive.

The end of the path is having one's calling and election made sure. There are apparently three different ways in which this may occur. These appear to be (1) through the Spirit telling you that you shall inherit eternal life, (2) by the Savior personally appearing to you

(also called the Second Comforter) and among other things telling you that you shall have eternal life, or (3) receiving with your companion the second anointing.

There is another term found in the scriptures referring to yet another and clearly more advanced spiritual state; that term is "purified." Before launching into our effort to explain this we want to let you know that to us the words "pure", "purified" etc. seem to be used in different scriptures in what clearly appears to be two different ways. When one receives their remission of sins through the baptism of fire or the Holy Ghost it is clear that all of their sins are forgiven which cleanses and purifies them. In fact, in some scriptures the terms "clean hands and a pure heart", and "pure", "clean", "purified" are used as synonyms for this spiritual birth. But, remember that this is only the beginning of the path. We have just been born again or born anew spiritually, and, hence, are only little children spiritually. Like all children we then must grow and mature spiritually, just as we do physically.

The second use of the word "purified" refers to a much more spiritually mature state as found, for example, in the phrase "purified and cleansed from all sin." It is this second use of the word "purified" that is discussed here. This state of "purification" may or may not be the same thing as transfiguration; although there are some obvious similarities with the very limited accounts of transfiguration that we have. The following account from 3 Nephi 19 is an excellent example where the Savior uses the word "purified" in this second way. This conclusion stems from the sequence of events, for after the twelve disciples received their baptism of fire, they then had another even more intense experience in which they became "as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus" after which Jesus refers to them in verse 28 as having been "purified".

3 Nephi 19:25-28. And it came to pass that Jesus blessed them as they did pray unto him; and his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them, and behold they were as white as the countenance and also the garments of Jesus; and behold the whiteness thereof did exceed all the whiteness, yea, even there could be nothing upon earth so white as the whiteness thereof.

26 And Jesus said unto them: Pray on; nevertheless they did not cease to pray.

27 And he turned from them again, and went a little way off and bowed himself to the earth; and he prayed again unto the Father, saying:

28 Father, I thank thee that thou hast PURIFIED those whom I have chosen, because of their faith, and I pray for them, and also for them who shall believe on their words, that they may be purified in me, through faith on their words, even as they are purified in me.

29 Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them.

30 And when Jesus had spoken these words he came again unto his disciples; and behold they did pray steadfastly, without ceasing, unto him; and he did smile upon them again; and behold they were white, even as Jesus.

The following scriptures describe the spiritual power of those who are "purified and cleansed from all sin" as having the authority to "ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done."

D&C 50:26-30: *He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.*

27 Wherefore, he is possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto him, both in heaven and on the earth, the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son.

*28 But no man is possessor of all things except he be **PURIFIED and cleansed from all sin.***

*29 And **if ye are PURIFIED and cleansed from all sin, ye shall ask whatsoever you will in the name of Jesus and it shall be done.***

30 But know this, it shall be given you what you shall ask; and as ye are appointed to the head, the spirits shall be subject unto you.

Final Thoughts

Helaman 10:4-5: *Blessed art thou, Nephi, for those things which thou hast done; for I have beheld how thou hast with unwearyingness declared the word, which I have given unto thee, unto this people. And thou hast not feared them, and hast not sought thine own life, but hast sought my will, and to keep my commandments.*

*5 And now, because thou hast done this with such unwearyingness, behold, I will bless thee forever; and I will make thee mighty in word and in deed, in faith and in works; yea, **even that all things shall be done unto thee according to thy word, for thou shalt not ask that which is contrary to my will.***

Note in the following verses about the Prophet Joseph that this spiritual authority is also associated with having one's calling and election made sure, for in these verses we learn that Joseph received precisely that.

*D&C 132:48-49. And again, verily I say unto you, my servant Joseph, that **whatsoever you give on earth and to whomsoever you give anyone on earth, by my word and according to my law it shall be visited with blessings and not cursings, and with my power, saith the Lord and shall be without condemnation on earth and in heaven.***

*49 For I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for **verily I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father with Abraham your father.***

Thus, according to the scriptures "purification" is another clearly more advanced or higher spiritual condition which is another divinely bestowed blessing, gift or endowment. We think we can also safely say that the state of "purification" is either the same thing as or at the very least very similar to the end of the strait and narrow way of having one's calling and election made sure and receiving the second anointing (administered by the Prophet, or his agent, either in the Holy of Holies in the Salt Lake Temple or in a similar room in other temples).

To reemphasize the difference between "sanctification" and "purification" notice the Prophet Joseph's progression from his experience upon being baptized in May 1829 to 1831 (Sec. 132 was recorded in 1843 but first received in 1831) when the Lord told him that his calling and election was made sure.

Jos. Smith - History 73-74 *Im mediately on our coming up out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, so soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation of the children of men. We were filled with the Holy Ghost and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.*

74 Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we could never attain to previously, nor ever before thought of.

D&C 132:48-50. *And again, verily I say unto you, my servant Joseph, that whatsoever you give on earth, and to whomsoever you give anyone on earth, by my word and according to my law, it shall be visited with blessings and not cursings, and with my power, saith the Lord, and shall be without condemnation on earth and in heaven.*

49 For I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for verily I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father with Abraham your father.

50 Behold, I have seen your sacrifices, and will forgive all your sins; I have seen your sacrifices in obedience to that which I have told you.

How does one progress from sanctification to purification? As best as we can determine it is by doing more of the same and especially by obeying the commandments of the spirit that will tell you all things that ye should do. We also believe that it certainly involves being

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sufficiently faithful in the additional trials that surely will come as discussed in depth in Chapter 25.

The scriptures and the personal experiences of Joseph Smith suggest or indicate that the purifying effect of receiving the Holy Ghost apparently needs to occur more than once in order to become "purified." The best illustration of this that we know of is the sequence of events in 3 Nephi 19.

The experiences of the Prophet Joseph are also instructive on the multiplicity of remissions. Even though in 1831 the Lord told Joseph that his calling and election was made sure, yet, in about a half dozen or so later sections of the D&C the Lord tells Joseph that his sins are forgiven, apparently meaning those sins occurring after the last remission. Did Joseph also experience a renewal or refreshing of the baptism of fire? Joseph was certainly filled with the spirit when receiving such revelations. One of our friends who first experienced his baptism of fire at the tender age of ten who is now in his mid 50's has personally experienced from time to time, pursuant to fasting, prayer and seeking, what he calls renewals of his remission of sins complete with being filled with the fire of the spirit. Yet, we are unable to find in the scriptures, other than in 3 Nephi 19, specific references to or instances of what might be considered such renewals or refreshings. However, it is worth noting that the scriptures speak ONLY in terms of "retaining a remission of sins" and obeying the spirit.

Except as discussed in the preceding paragraph, such "renewals or refreshings" are also beyond the scope of our experience. We simply do not have near enough experience beyond our own limited personal experiences to be able to make any other general statements. Indeed, it seems to us that the scriptures are intended simply to bring us to the point where we become sanctified and from that point on we are expected to obey the promptings of the spirit. We have found very little in the scriptures on the subject of what one does after being sanctified. In fact, VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING that we have found on that subject is quoted in full later in this chapter under the heading "ENDURING TO THE END - OR RETAINING A REMISSION OF YOUR SINS."

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Remember, that where much is given much is expected and that he who sins against the greater light receives the greater condemnation. One of the reasons that receiving this blessing requires such commitment and focus is that the consequences of thereafter dropping out are so serious. Indeed, the risks or consequences of serious sins after being born again would appear to include now having had sufficient witness from the Holy Ghost to be in very serious trouble including the strong possibility, if not a certainty, of becoming a Son of Perdition if one should thereafter reject the Gospel. This observation is based on the following verses of scripture and the quoted statement of the Prophet Joseph.

2 Nephi 31:14-16. *But behold, my beloved brethren, thus came the voice of the Son unto me, saying: After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by the baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even the tongue of angels, and **after this should deny me, it would be better for you that ye had not known me.***

15 And I heard a voice from the Father, saying: yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

16 And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.

D&C 82:1-4, 7, 10. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, my servants, that inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you.*

2 Nevertheless, there are those among you who have sinned exceedingly; yea, even all of you have sinned; but verily I say unto you, beware from henceforth, and refrain from sin, lest sore judgments fall upon your heads.

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3 For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and HE WHO SINS AGAINST THE GREATER LIGHT SHALL RECEIVE THE GREATER CONDEMNATION.

4 Ye call upon my name for revelations, and I give them unto you; and inasmuch as ye keep not my sayings, which I give unto you, ye become transgressors; and justice and judgment are the penalty which is affixed unto my law.

...

7 And now, verily I say unto you, I, the Lord, will not lay any sin to your charge; go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God.

...

10 I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.

TPJS All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for Jesus will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? **He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against him. After a man has sinned against him, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened to him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it: and from that time he begins to be an enemy.** Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 358.

We mention this to make the point that one should not seek to receive the baptism of the spirit unless one's central desire is to come unto Christ, because the scriptures and the Prophets agree that thereafter falling away FROM CHRIST can have very serious consequences indeed.

WHAT IT IS - ADDITIONAL ASPECTS

Qualify as a Candidate for the Church of the Firstborn.

The Church of the Firstborn is the name the Lord has given to the congregation of those who attain eternal life which is the glory of the celestial kingdom. According to the following scripture the "book of the names of the sanctified" is the record of those in this congregation.

D&C 88:1-5 Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you who have assembled yourselves together to receive his will concerning you:

2 Behold, this is pleasing unto your Lord, and the angels rejoice over you; the alms of your prayers have come up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and are recorded in the book of the names of sanctified, even them of the celestial world.

3 Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

5 Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son -

We add the following additional important scriptures on the subject.

D&C 93:21-22 And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn;

22 And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn.

D&C 76:50-54 And again we bear record - for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just -

51 They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given -

52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

53 And who overcome by faith and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

54 **They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.**

D&C 107:18-19 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church --

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, **to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn**, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

As we understand it, upon receiving one's initial sanctification one becomes eligible for, or a candidate for, the Church of the Firstborn with permanent membership conditioned upon or subject to faithfully enduring to the end. Another way of looking at it is to consider that your name is written in the book of the names of the sanctified in pencil. Your membership in that congregation, which means your exaltation is sure, becomes permanent and your name is written in indelible ink in the book of the names of the sanctified either when your calling and election is made sure in this life or you have faithfully endured to the end.

Certain Additional Knowledge

Being sanctified is the primary requirement for receiving the things which the brother of Jared saw as recorded in the sealed portion of the plates according to the following from Ether 4.

Ether 4:4-7 Behold, I have written upon these plates the very things which the brother of Jared saw; and there never were greater things made manifest than those which were made manifest unto the brother of Jared.

5 Wherefore the Lord hath commanded me to write them; and I have written them. And he commanded me that I should seal them up; and he also hath commanded that I should seal up the interpretation thereof; wherefore I have sealed up the interpreters, according to the commandment of the Lord.

6 For the Lord said unto me: They shall not go forth unto the Gentiles until the day that they shall repent of their iniquity, and become clean before the Lord.

*7 And in the day that they shall **exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that THEY MAY BECOME SANCTIFIED IN ME, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are.***

New Insights Into The Scriptures

As one small illustration of expanded understandings, consider how you now understand the following scripture.

D&C 131:5-6 (May 17th, 1843) The more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood.

6 It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.

Judgments Stayed

D&C 39:17-18 Wherefore lay to with your might and call faithful laborers into my vinyard, that it may be pruned for the last time.

*18 And inasmuch as they do **repent and receive the fulness of my gospel, and become sanctified, I WILL STAY MINE HAND IN JUDGMENT.***

ENDURING TO THE END - OR RETAINING A REMISSION OF YOUR SINS

"Enduring to the end" is one of the great catch-phrases in the church. One lady, who after learning of the steps of repentance, including confession of sins and that receiving the change was really only the beginning, wryly observed that "The real challenge was enduring to the beginning." We find it hard to disagree with that observation.

Nonetheless, having experienced the change, what comes next? Are we "home free" and just able to coast? Are we now immunized against ever sinning again? As much as we may wish that to be true the scriptures tell us that much additional faith and works are required of those who embark on this path.

Consider what 4th Nephi tells us of the activities of their Zion Society.

*4th Nephi 12. And they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the law of Moses; but **they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft to pray and to hear the word of the Lord.***

Each, individually, (1) continued in fasting and prayer, and (2) strove to "walk after the commandments". Presumably the commandments spoken of here are not only the written commandments applicable to all but the individual "commandments" via the promptings of the Spirit. Indeed, much of the benefit from this change is the ability to have the Spirit be one's guide. It would be absurd in the extreme to not follow the spiritual guidance now available. And on top of that, if one ignores it what do you think the chances are that one would continue to enjoy the blessings of such guidance - to say nothing of the adverse consequences that would surely come from such disobedience?

And as a group they met "together oft to pray and to hear the word of the Lord." Notice also the emphasis on immersing oneself in the word of the Lord. Nephi, also, in the following verses impressively emphasizes the importance of "feasting upon the word."

2 Nephi 31:18-21: And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by the way ye should receive.

*19 And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for **ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save.***

20 Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

*21 And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under the heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, **THIS IS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end. Amen.***

In Chapter 32 of 2 Nephi verses 1-6 Nephi gives us his summation in the following words.

And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts?

2 Do ye not remember that I said unto you that AFTER ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?

*3 ANGELS SPEAK BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, **feast upon the words of Christ; for, behold, THE WORDS OF CHRIST WILL TELL YOU ALL THINGS WHAT YE SHOULD DO.***

4 Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ASK not, neither do ye KNOCK; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, BUT MUST PERISH IN THE DARK.

5 For behold, AGAIN I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, AND RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST, IT WILL SHOW UNTO YOU ALL THINGS WHAT YE SHOULD DO.

*6 **BEHOLD, THIS IS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST,** and there will be no more doctrine given until after he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh. And when he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh, the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do.*

At this point we pause to digress for a moment to bring your attention to verse 7, which has a most mournful and sobering message for us. Remember that Nephi saw our day and was writing to those who would READ his record, in other words, THE MEMBERS OF THE LDS CHURCH and any others who accept the Book of Mormon as scripture.

7 And now I, Nephi, cannot say more; the Spirit stoppeth mine utterance, and I am left to mourn because of the UNBELIEF, and the WICKEDNESS, and the IGNORANCE, and the STIFFNECKEDNESS of men; for they will not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge, WHEN IT IS GIVEN UNTO THEM IN PLAINNESS, EVEN AS PLAIN AS WORD CAN BE.

ARE YOU DISTURBED BY THE MESSAGE IN THIS VERSE AND THE THOUGHT THAT IT APPLIES TO YOU?

We have added this verse and these few comments because ever since the time when each of us gained our understanding of the central message of this book, we each have sought to share it in the various quorums and classes that we have been called to teach over the years. Would you be surprised to learn that the message has almost without exception been ignored, and that we each have been rebuffed and even rebuked for teaching these principles?

We have chosen to focus on putting forth the message as clearly as possible rather than on the many scriptures addressed to those who will not hear this oh so vital message, such as portions of Chapters 32 and 33 of 2 Nephi. **However, the consequences of not hearkening and obeying by seeking for and obtaining one's own remission of sins and rebirth by the Holy Spirit certainly should be painfully obvious indeed.**

Well, enough said on this sobering and most uncomfortable (both for us and, presumably, for you) point. Now back to the main theme of what one who has entered into the way must do thereafter.

Moroni emphasizes the importance of retaining the pure love of Christ in one's heart through prayer.

***Moroni 8:26** And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of meekness and lowliness of heart cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which comforter*

fillet with hope and perfect love, **which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God.**

Moroni 7:46-48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail -

47 But **charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.**

48 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, **pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath BESTOWED upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure. Amen**

Finally, King Benjamin, in his heavenly message, for it was given to him by an angel, gives us direction on practical applications on day to day a basis. We have done enough commenting. Perhaps you will wish to make your own highlighting and commenting on these special verses.

Mosiah 4:11-30: And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth you such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

12 And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true.

13 And ye will not have a mind to injure one another, but to live peaceably, and to render to every man according to that which is his due.

14 And ye will not suffer your children that they go hungry, or naked; neither will ye suffer that they transgress the laws of God, and fight and quarrel one with another, and serve the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness.

15 But ye will teach them to walk in the ways of truth and soberness; ye will teach them to love one another and to serve one another.

16 And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.

17 Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just -

18 But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.

19 For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?

20 And behold, even at this time, ye have been calling on his name and begging for a remission of your sins. And has he suffered that ye have begged in vain? Nay; he has poured out his Spirit upon you, and has caused that your hearts should be filled with joy, and has caused that your mouths should be stopped that ye could not find utterance, so exceedingly great was your joy.

21 And now, if God, who has created you, on whom you are dependent for your lives and for all that ye have and are, doth grant unto you whatsoever ye ask that is right, in faith, believing

that ye shall receive, O then, how ye ought to impart of the substance that ye have one to another.

22 And if ye judge the man who putteth up his petition to you for your substance that he perish not, and condemn him, how much more just will be your condemnation for withholding your substance, which doth not belong to you but to God, to whom also your life belongeth; and yet ye put up no petition, nor repent of the thing which thou hast done.

23 I say unto you, wo be unto that man, for his substance shall perish with him; and now, I say these things unto those who are rich as pertaining to the things of this world.

24 And again, I say unto the poor, ye who have not and yet have sufficient, that ye remain from day to day; I mean all who deny the beggar, because ye have not; I would that ye say in your hearts that: I give not because I have not, but if I had I would give.

25 And now, if ye say this in your hearts ye remain guiltless, otherwise ye are condemned; and your condemnation is just for ye covet that which ye have not received.

26 And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you - that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God - I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

27 And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize; therefore, all things must be done in order.

28 And I would that ye should remember, that whosoever among you borroweth of his neighbor should return the thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt commit sin; and perhaps thou shalt cause thy neighbor to commit sin also.

29 And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.

30 But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of your Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not.

THE ONLY WAY - KEEPING AND FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD

Long before I understood what receiving the Holy Ghost actually means I was aware of the following incidents. Now that I truly understand what they really signify, I can not think of a more fitting summation than the final words of both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young from beyond the grave and the words of President Benson.

Several years after the death of the Prophet Joseph, Joseph visited President Brigham Young who recorded that experience as follows.

Joseph stepped toward me and looking very earnestly, yet pleasantly, said: "Tell the people to be humble and faithful, and be sure to keep the spirit of the Lord and it will lead them right. Be careful and not turn away the small still voice; it will teach them what to do and where to go; it will yield the fruits of the Kingdom. Tell the brethren to keep their hearts open to conviction, so that when the Holy Ghost comes to them their hearts will be ready to receive it. They can tell the spirit of the Lord from all spirits; it will whisper peace and joy to their souls; it will take malice, hatred, strife, and all evil from their hearts; and their whole desire will be to do good, bring forth righteousness and build up the kingdom of God. Tell the brethren if they will follow the spirit of the Lord, they will go right. Be sure to tell the people to keep the spirit of the Lord; and if they will, they will find themselves just as they were organized by our Father in Heaven before they came into the world. Our Father in heaven organized the human family, but they are all disorganized and in great confusion." (Journal History of the Church, 23 Feb. 1847)

After the death of Brigham Young, President Wilford Woodruff had a similar encounter with President Young:

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On one occasion, I saw Brother Brigham and Brother Heber ride in a carriage ahead of the carriage in which I rode when I was on my way to attend conference; and they were dressed in the most priestly robes. When we arrived at our destination I asked Prest. Young if he would preach to us. He said, "No, I have finished my testimony in the flesh I shall not talk to this people anymore. But (said he) I have come to see you; I have come to watch over you, and to see what the people are doing. Then (said he) I want you to teach the people - and I want you to follow this counsel yourself - that they must labor and so live as to obtain the Holy Spirit, for without this you cannot build up the kingdom; without the spirit of God you are in danger of walking in the dark, and in danger of failing to accomplish your calling as apostles and elders in the church and kingdom of God." (Journal of Discourses, 21:318)

As we started with the words of President Benson, we think it appropriate to also conclude with these words from his October '85 Conference address entitled "Born of God". (We encourage you to carefully reread the entire address.)

The "change of heart" and "born again" processes are best described in the keystone of our religion, the Book of Mormon.

Those who had been born of God after hearing King Benjamin's address had a mighty change in their hearts. They had "no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually." (See Mosiah 5:2, 7.)

The fourth chapter of Alma describes a period in Nephite history when "the church began to fail in its progress." (Alma 4:10) Alma met this challenge by resigning his seat as a chief judge in government "and confined him self wholly to the high priesthood" responsibility which was his. (Alma 4:20.)

He bore "down in pure testimony" against the people (see Alma 4:19), and in the fifth chapter of Alma he asks over forty crucial questions.

*Speaking frankly to the members of the Church, he declared, "I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye **experienced** this mighty change in your hearts." (Alma 5:14.)*

*He continued, "If ye have **experienced** a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?" (Alma 5:26.)*

Would not the progress of the Church increase dramatically today with an increasing number of those who are spiritually reborn? Can you imagine what would happen in our homes? Can you imagine what would happen with an increasing number of copies of the Book of Mormon in the hands of an increasing number of missionaries who know how to use it and have been born of God? When this happens, we will get the harvest President Kimball envisions. It was the "born of God" Alma who as a missionary was so able to impart the word that many others were also born of God. (See Alma 36:23-26.)

The Lord works from the inside out. The world works from the outside in. The world would take people out of the slums. Christ takes the slums out of people, and then they take themselves out of the slums. The world would mold men by changing their environment. Christ changes men, who then change their environment. The world would shape human behavior, but CHRIST CAN CHANGE HUMAN NATURE. Ensign, Nov. '85, P. 6

CHAPTER 25

CAUTION: BEWARE THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TWO-EDGE SWORD!!

For those who desire to and do come unto Christ by experiencing the mighty change, IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT YOU UNDERSTAND THAT SATAN'S EFFORTS TO ENTRAP, DECEIVE, OR DELUDE YOU WILL INCREASE AND THE NATURE OF THOSE EFFORTS WILL CHANGE TO MATCH YOUR NEW SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENTS!

NEVER, NEVER, NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE ADVERSARY TO DECEIVE!!!

This vitally important chapter was added because we are aware of several people who have enjoyed powerful, even extraordinary spiritual experiences as part of their baptism of fire who appear to most to have been deceived and deluded into acting outside of the Lord's established commandments.

We believe that your best defense against these increased efforts of Satan to destroy is to understand that they will come, so that you may be properly prepared and can thereby continue to prevail against Satan, our adversary in this battle for our souls which commenced long, long ago in the pre-mortal realm.

The operative eternal principle that enables Satan to challenge one's new spiritual growth in new and even miraculous ways we call the principle of balance in all things or the principle of the two edged sword which cuts both ways with equal force and effectiveness. The name fits because Satan is permitted to continue to test and challenge us in ways equal to or commensurate with our new spiritual development. This principle of balance appears to apply to all realms. One manifestation of this principle in the physical world is one of Newton's laws which states that "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." Furthermore, it is likely, but definitely not certain, that these challenges may not happen right away. They may well come months or even years later. And, like any good general, the adversary will seek to attack using the element of surprise or when defenses are down. Hence, the absolute necessity of staying on the path and continuing in prayer, fasting, searching the scriptures, and loving and serving others.

This whole scenario of falling away after receiving the mighty change is covered in Lehi's dream, a representation of the whole process of coming unto Christ and attaining the celestial kingdom. As you recall, the tree in that vision represents the "... the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore it is the most desirable above all things." 1 Nephi 11:22 In our view tasting the fruit of the tree clearly represents experiencing the mighty change and receiving one's remission of sins, for certainly that is an extraordinary episode of tasting or experiencing the love of God. Now consider what Lehi observed about some who had tasted of this fruit:

1 Nephi 8:24-28 And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

25 And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.

26 And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

27 And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers towards those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

28 And AFTER they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.

Know also that the ways by which one may fall away are many, indeed far more than could be listed here. In fact, one of the challenges may include opposition from some unaware priesthood leaders. We are aware of a situation some years ago in which a woman who had received her remission of sins and born again experience enjoyed a number of special spiritual experiences and revelations which she shared with her Bishop. Her Bishop was, unfortunately, totally without even a glimmering of understanding of this experience and wound up summarily excommunicating her! The rest of the story is that within about nine months thereafter the Bishop suddenly died. (We are not suggesting that there necessarily was a connection between the two events.) Shortly after his death he returned to this woman pleading profusely for her forgiveness, which he obtained. All turned out well. She and the Bishop have become very good friends during his subsequent visits to her. It appears that the challenges can come from anyone or anyplace.

The other message that we wish to give here is that in reality, these renewed efforts of the adversary to deceive us are not to be feared, for when we are properly prepared such efforts only serve to strengthen us. This becomes apparent by pondering some more of the great insights of Brigham Young. As we searched the Discourses of Brigham Young for some of his thoughts on this subject, we discovered some very interesting comments on the essential nature of the role of the adversary. [Unless otherwise indicated all quotes are from the "Discourses of Brigham Young" as selected and arranged by John A. Widtsoe.]

God permits sin, or it could not be here. Pg. 76

Aside from the revelations in our day, there is not knowledge enough to tell you why God suffered sin to come into the world. You have been told the reason why - that all intelligence must prove facts by their opposite. Pg. 76

Evil is with us, it is that influence which tempts to sin, and which has been permitted to come into the world for the express purpose of giving us an opportunity of proving ourselves before God, before Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother, before the holy angels, and before all good men, that we are determined to overcome the evil, and cleave to the good, for the Lord has given us the ability to do so. Consequently, when the evil is present with me, I have a little fighting to do, I must turn and combat it until it is eradicated from my affections, as well as from my actions, that I may have power to do all the good I wish to perform. Every person is capable of this, all can bridle their tongues, and cease from every evil act from this time henceforth and forever, and do good instead. Pg. 70

Sin has come into the world, and death by sin. I frequently ask myself the question: Was there any necessity for sin to enter the world? Most assuredly there was, according to my understanding and reasoning powers. Did I not know the evil I could never know the good; had I not seen the light I should never be able to comprehend what darkness is. Had I never tried to see and behold a thing in darkness I could not understand the beauty and glory of light. If I had never tasted the bitter or the sour how could I define or describe the sweet? Pg. 77

Sin is in the world, but it is not necessary that we should sin, because sin is in the world; but, to the contrary, it is necessary that we should resist sin, and for this purpose is sin necessary. Sin exists in all the eternities. Sin is co-eternal with righteousness, for it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things. Pg. 78

Do not imagine that I am in the least finding fault with the Devil. I would not bring a railing accusation against him, for he is fulfilling his office and calling manfully; he is more faithful in his calling than are many of the people. God is not yet going to destroy wickedness from the earth. How frequently we hear it reiterated from the pulpit that he is going to destroy all wickedness. No such thing. He will destroy the power of sin. The work the Savior has on hand is to reduce the

power of the Devil to perfect subjection; and when he has destroyed death and him that has the power of it, pertaining to this world, then he will deliver up the kingdom spotless to the Father. Pg. 71

How much does it take to prepare a man, or woman, or any being, to become angels to the Devil, to suffer with him to all eternity? Just as much as it does to prepare a man to go into the celestial kingdom, into the presence of the Father and the Son, and to be made an heir to his Kingdom, and all his glory, and be crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives. Pg. 79

Now back to the subject of the additional testing by the adversary that surely will come. In the teachings of Brigham Young there are a number of pertinent statements about this testing, which apply equally as well to the individual member as to the church as a whole. Consider thoughtfully and ponder the following words of President Young.

If true principles are revealed from heaven to men, and if there are angels, and there is a possibility of their communication to the human family, always look for an opposite power, an evil power, to give manifestations also; look out for the counterfeit. Pgs. 68-69.

False Spirits - There are many spirits gone out in to the world, and the false spirits are giving revelations as well as the Spirit of the Lord. 3:44

There are myriads of disembodied evil spirits - those who have long ago laid down their bodies here and in the regions round about, among and around us; and they are trying to make us and our children sick, and are trying to destroy us and to tempt us to evil. They will try every possible means they are masters of to draw us aside from the path of righteousness. 6:73-4

The children of men give heed to the deceiving spirits that are abroad, and that is the cause of the ten thousand errors, wrongs, sins and divisions which are in the world, and for this reason the multitude are unable to distinguish between the voice of the Good Shepherd and the voice of the stranger. 16:75

It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise. It was told you here that Brother Joseph warned the Elders of Israel against false spirits. It was revealed to me that if the people did not receive the spirit of revelation that God had sent for the salvation of the world, they would receive false spirits and would have revelation. Men would have revelation, women would have revelation, the priest in the pulpit and the deacon under the pulpit would have revelation, and the people would have revelation enough to damn the whole nation, and nations of them, unless they would hearken to the voice of God. It was not only revealed to Joseph but to your humble servant, that false spirits would be as prevalent and as common among the inhabitants of the earth as we now see them. Pg. 72

There is evil in the world, and there is also good. Was there ever a counterfeit without a true coin? No. Is there communication from God? Yes. From holy angels? Yes; and we have been proclaiming these facts during nearly thirty years. Are there any communications from evil spirits? Yes; and the Devil is making the people believe very strongly in revelations from the spirit world. Pg. 73

Remember that the Devil did not tempt Christ until AFTER the marvelously strengthening experiences of his forty day fast nor did he appear to Moses until AFTER Moses had experienced the glory of the presence of the Lord. Moses 1:1-22. But to each the adversary did personally come and made an effort to tempt, deceive and delude through lies.

The following words of Brigham Young superbly explain the reason for this additional testing.

The Principle of the Two Edged Sword

I ask, is there a reason for men and women being exposed more constantly and more powerfully, to the power of the enemy, by having visions than by not having them? There is and it is simply this - God never bestows upon his people, or upon an individual, superior blessings without a severe trial to prove them, to prove that individual, or that people, to see whether they will keep their covenants with him, and keep in remembrance what He has shown them. Then the greater the vision, the greater the display of the power of the enemy.

So when individuals are blessed with visions, revelations, and great temptations, LOOK OUT, THEN THE DEVIL IS NIGH YOU, AND YOU WILL BE TEMPTED IN PROPORTION TO THE VISIONS, REVELATION, OR MANIFESTATION YOU HAVE RECEIVED. Journal of Discourses Vol. 3, pgs. 205-206.

Just how effective and deceiving can the efforts of the adversary be? Surprisingly, the highly disturbing answer is "As effective as necessary."

Consider carefully what Brigham Young says in this next quote about the effectiveness of Satan's efforts to deceive, and then we will share with you some actual events of today that powerfully illustrate the adversary's power to attempt to deceive.

There are many elders in this house, who if I had the power to mesmerize that vase and make it dance on that table, would say that it was done by the power of God. Who could tell whether it was done by the power of God or by the power of the Devil? No person, unless he had the revelations of Jesus Christ within him. I suppose you are ready to ask Brother Brigham if he thinks the power of the Devil could make the vase dance. Yes, and could take it up and carry it out doors, just as easy as to turn up a table and move it here and there, or to cause a rap, rap, rap or to bake and pass around pancakes, or get hold of a person's hand, and make him write in every style you can think of, imitating George Washington's, Benjamin Franklin's, Joseph Smith's, and other autographs. Can you tell whether that is by the power of God or by the power of the Devil? No, unless you have the revelations of Jesus Christ. Pg. 74

Now to some actual incidents that powerfully illustrate the great power the adversary and those that serve him have to deceive.

The first incident involves a good friend who to his great surprise received his baptism of fire when he was just ten years old, when he was simply praying to know if the Book of Mormon was true. In his early forties this man was called to serve as Bishop. While he was serving faithfully as Bishop, a spirit spoke to him and told him that "The brethren are all liars." The truly startling part of his experience is not that a spirit spoke to him, but that as that spirit spoke, **the lying statement was accompanied by a power of conviction conveyed into his heart that was indistinguishable from and as strong as his own testimony of the Gospel.** And, this power of conviction stayed with him testifying in his heart that indeed the brethren were all liars.

What did our friend do about this remarkable experience and "testimony" that he had received? To his great credit, he wisely did nothing. He continued to serve faithfully as Bishop. But even more remarkable was that this statement and the power of conviction that accompanied it stayed with him and burdened his heart for about TWO YEARS. Then, after about two years, one day he was pondering once again this extraordinary experience and the powerful "testimony" that had burned into his heart. The thought came into his mind "Are the lives of the brethren the lives of men who are liars?" As he considered that in light of his substantial knowledge of the lives of the brethren (for he had taught both Seminary and Institute for many years) he concluded that without question the lives of the brethren were not lives of men who were liars and, therefore, the statement spoken to him some two years ago was absolutely a lie. As he came to that conclusion, he heard a voice saying something to the effect of, "Very good. Your test is now over. Realize now that it was a liar who told you that the brethren were liars." As he heard those words the power of conviction that had accompanied that lying statement was gone from his heart.

The Principle of the Two Edged Sword

The other instances of the devastating power of Satan's minions to deceive and delude involved a mother and her grown daughter.

The mother had married her sweetheart from early childhood and enjoyed a truly good marriage with choice children. The dream ended suddenly when in his early forties her husband was discovered to be full of cancer and was gone within a few weeks. Subsequently she remarried but it was not the same. Her daughter says that her mother spent her efforts trying to make her second husband into her first. September had been Mother's and her first husband's special time because it encompassed their birthdays and their anniversary and it was always the month in which they took trips, made special purchases, and so on. Not surprisingly after her first husband's "graduation", every September mother became significantly depressed.

Mother was a lifelong, strong, faithful church member serving in many positions including Stake Primary President, counselor in a Stake Relief Society, and was at this time a Temple worker. Mother also worked as a nurse in a hospital where she had access to many drugs. One September, as mother struggled with her depression, while talking with her daughter one evening her conversation became quite bizarre. Daughter asked her mother if she was taking drugs which she denied. Within a week or so thereafter daughter received a phone call from the hospital that her mother had overdosed on drugs and was in critical condition. The mother lingered in a coma for about four months before passing away without ever regaining consciousness.

Her mother's death was very difficult for the daughter but she was determined to endure her great sorrow well. So she began to more diligently serve her family and others and also undertook a vigorous physical fitness program of healthy eating and running. This continued for a number of months during which she lost a lot of weight and inches, regained her girlish figure, got up to running about 25 miles a week and was looking and feeling great. Then she became seriously ill. Examination showed that her immune system was severely dysfunctional with virtually no white blood cells. She was bedridden for about a year. Though basically bedfast, after several months she oh so slowly began to improve. Since her mother's death and especially now she voraciously read and pondered the scriptures.

One day while lying in bed she felt powerful, loving, maternal feelings full of light come over her. This was most welcome and it felt so very good to experience that maternal love again, for she missed her mother so. Then she observed three women spirits in her room and they began to speak to her. They praised her for her good works and service to others. She was astonished at how much they knew about her life and the things she had done. In fact, it seemed to her that they knew everything that had happened in her life from the moment of her birth. They commiserated with her about how bad her health was. They puzzled with her about why "he" permitted her to suffer so, especially after all she had endured and done for others.

As the conversation continued they began to suggest that she never was going to get any better. Then they got around to suggesting that since she was not going to get any better, why not get out now. They began to tell her of several ways in which she could end her life and no one would ever know. By this time her eyes had begun to open and she began to ask where her visitors were from. As she asked these questions the feelings she was experiencing began to change, to become darker. She told them that the things which they were suggesting were wrong and were against what Heavenly Father taught us. They said that they had said nothing about Father but were concerned about her poor health and dismal future. As she probed more into who they were and where they were from their facades vanished and she knew whose servants they were. She felt the full force of their hatred, rage and desire to destroy her which left her spitless with fright. She immediately began praying for deliverance and Father's help. Instantly they were gone.

As she lay pondering her experience the Spirit began to tell her that she had prayed often to understand what had happened to her mother. The Spirit then explained that her mother had

been so ill that when those spirits had come to her that she had not recognized them. As mother accepted their advice they had gained more and more influence and control until, finally, they had led her to overdose on drugs.

We have shared with you these examples from today, (all these events occurred in the early to mid 1980's) of just how powerful the efforts of the adversary can be to deceive and delude in order that you might have a better understanding of the many powerful tools the adversary has in order that you might more readily recognize such efforts aimed at you or your loved ones.

What then have we learned and what can we say about the scope of the Adversary's power to deceive. In our judgment one rule is: **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE ADVERSARY TO DECEIVE!!!** (Neither we nor those involved have any answers on any other questions that these incidents might bring to mind.)

Other principles are also clear which can perhaps best be summarized by the statement, "Cling to the Iron Rod." By that we mean in part to read and follow the word of God. It also means that one must really know the scriptures, not just casually read them from time to time. The following powerful promise to those who know, love and search the scriptures is found in Joseph's inspired revision of Matthew 24.

Matt. 24:37 And whoso treasureth my word, SHALL NOT BE DECEIVED,

Remember, that His "word" certainly includes personal revelations as well as the scriptures.

Know also that the adversary has no power to overcome you against your will. He and his servants will do their absolute utmost to lead you astray, but they can not pick you up and throw you off the path; they must deceive, delude or otherwise lead you astray. Brigham Young had some most interesting comments about this.

You are aware that many think that the Devil has rule and power over body and spirit. Now, I want to tell you that he does not hold any power over man, only so far as the body overcomes the spirit that is in a man, through yielding to the spirit of evil. The spirit that the Lord puts into a tabernacle of flesh, is under the dictation of the Lord Almighty; but the spirit and the body are united in order that the spirit may have a tabernacle, and be exalted; and the spirit is influenced by the body, and the body by the spirit.

In the first place the spirit is pure, and under the special control and influence of the Lord, but the body is of the earth, and is subject to the power of the Devil, and is under the mighty influence of that fallen nature that is of the earth. If the spirit yields to the body, the Devil then has power to overcome the body and spirit of that man, and he loses both.

Recollect, brethren and sisters, every one of you, that when evil is suggested to you, when it arises in your hearts, it is through temporal organization. When you are tempted, buffeted, and step out of the way inadvertently; when you are overtaken in a fault, or commit an overt act unthinkingly; when you are full of evil passion, and wish to yield to it, then stop and let the spirit, which God has put into your tabernacle, take the lead. If you do that, I will promise that you will overcome all evil, and obtain eternal lives. But many, very many, let the spirit yield to the body, and are overcome and destroyed. 2:255 Pgs. 69-70.

The other day, while reading from 1st Nephi we saw for the first time in the last half of Chapter 2 and the first few verses of Chapter 3 an absolutely classic and highly instructive example of the Lord's method of leadership and the principle of following His appointed leaders. The situation occurred just after Lehi and his family had left Jerusalem with Laman and Lemuel complaining to high heaven about the whole undertaking, so Nephi decided to seek confirmation directly from the Lord. 1 Nephi 2:16. And he received his answer, for according to the record,

... *I did cry unto the Lord; and behold he did visit me, and did soften my heart that I did believe all the words which had been spoken by my father; wherefore I did not rebel against him like unto my brothers.*

So the Lord granted unto Nephi the information he sought as well as some additional information. And we have a smattering of the revelations that Nephi received on that occasion or occasions in verses 19 to 24 of this chapter, including in verse 24 the reason that Laman and Lemuel were along on the journey. (Basically to provide opposition and to remind people of their constant, daily need for the Lord. Sound familiar?)

But what happened next as recounted in Chapter 3 verses 1-2 is what we find so instructive. First let us read the verses:

*1 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, returned from speaking with the Lord, to the tent of my father.
2 And it came to pass that he spake unto me, saying: Behold I have dreamed a dream, in the which the Lord hath commanded me that thou and thy brethren shall return to Jerusalem.*

And then Lehi goes on to explain the need for Nephi and his brothers to go get the brass plates of Laban. How is this a great example of how the Lord leads and instructs us? What is so striking here is who the Lord gave these commandments to and the circumstances under which they were given. Here, it seems that Nephi had just returned from what may well have been some extended period of time, probably hours - maybe even the better part of a day or perhaps longer - of praying to and communing with the Lord, perhaps even speaking face to face with him which the literal record strongly suggests, and **yet the Lord had said nothing to Nephi about going to get the plates even though it was to be Nephi's leadership and faith that would cause that mission to be successful.** Instead the Lord honored father Lehi's position as father, patriarch and leader of his family, to whom the Lord had given the direction to lead his family out of Jerusalem, and gave to that faithful father and prophet the vital instructions for his sons. Lehi then had to instruct Nephi and the others on the Lord's commandments about their mission to obtain the records. And Nephi was required to accept his father's instructions on faith and then carry out those instructions of the Lord that he had received through his father, his father. We see this as a clear and powerful example of the principle that the Lord honors and respects those leaders whom He has chosen.

Another striking example of the same principles occurs later on in their journey and is recorded in the beginning of Chapter 18 of 1st Nephi.

*1 Nephi 18:1-4 And it came to pass that they (Laman, Lemuel et al) did worship the Lord, and did go forth with me; and we did work timbers of curious workmanship. And the Lord did show me from time to time after what manner I should work the timbers of the ship.
2 Now I, Nephi, did not work timbers after the manner which was learned by men, neither did I build the ship after the manner of men; but I did build it after the manner which the Lord had shown unto me; wherefore, it was not after the manner of men.
3 And I, Nephi, did go into the mount oft, and I did pray oft unto the Lord; wherefore the Lord showed unto me great things.
4 And it came to pass that after I had finished the ship, according to the word of the Lord, my brethren beheld that it was good, and that the workmanship thereof was exceedingly fine; wherefore, they did humble themselves again before the Lord.*

How long do you think Nephi and the others labored to make their tools, gather materials and build the boat? Probably somewhere in the range of three to six months, perhaps longer if they had to let the lumber dry out or season. According to Nephi's record, which we just read, during that period on many occasions he communed with the Lord and was shown "great things." Now pay close attention to the next verse in the record.

5 And it came to pass that the voice of the Lord came unto my FATHER that we should arise and go down into the ship.

We think these are perfect examples of how the Lord honors and respects those he has called to leadership positions granting unto each according to their need AND THEIR CALLINGS appropriate guidance and inspiration and how the Lord requires us to follow proper leadership. **However, it is always appropriate, indeed even NECESSARY, to seek confirmation of the soundness of that leadership from the Lord, just as Nephi did at first. The Lord requires us NOT to follow blindly.**

But, in tests of faith and obedience following file leaders may not always be the answer either. In fact, on at least one occasion in the scriptures one described as "a man of God" (meaning a prophet) lost his life for obeying another prophet rather than obeying the direct word of the Lord to him. The incident is found in I Kings 13. There we read that this "man of God" was sent by the Lord up from Judah unto Beth-el to king Jeroboam to call the king and his people to repent of their idol worship. Further, we learn that the Lord instructed the man of God to "Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest." I Kings 13:9.

This prophet delivered the message to king Jeroboam and was faithful to the Lord's directions to fast when king Jeroboam subsequently invited him to dine. Verses 7-9. However, on his way home he encountered "an old prophet in Beth-el." We pick up the story at verse 11.

11 Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father.

12 And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah.

13 And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon,

14 And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am.

15 Then he said unto him, come home with me, and eat bread.

16 And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place:

17 For it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again by the way that thou camest.

Pay particular attention to this next verse as revised by the Prophet Joseph which tells us the reason for the actions of the old prophet.

18 He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water, that I may prove him; and he lied not unto him.

Unfortunately for the man of God, at this second entreaty from the old prophet he yielded and did as requested by the old prophet.

19 So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

After they had eaten the old prophet gave the man of God the bad news.

20 And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back:

*21 And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, thus saith the Lord, **Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee,***

22 But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the Lord did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

The grim fulfillment of the words of the old prophet to the man of God from Judah is recounted in the next few verses.

23 And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back.

24 And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase.

Incidentally, one remarkable sign that the death of the man of God by the lion was divinely decreed was that the ass was still at the scene (normally the ass would have frantically escaped at the first whiff of the lion's scent) and unharmed by the lion. When word of the death of the man of God from Judah reached the old prophet the scriptures report that this was his statement:

It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the Lord: therefore the Lord hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him according to the word of the Lord, which he spake unto him. (Verse 26).

We must also point out that this account was of two independent prophets. Since neither of them knew the other the evidence indicates that the old prophet had no direct leadership authority over the other.

One very prominent lesson from this extraordinary account is that direct revelation from the Lord OVERRIDES everything else. But note also that what the man of God was directed to do was NOT contrary to established doctrine and practices; rather it was special direction to him for that particular situation. This is a difficult case and we suggest that a prudent approach to it is to view it narrowly rather than to consider that it gives one wholesale license to go against priesthood leadership. **BUT IN EVERY CASE WE EMPHASIZE THAT IT IS ABSOLUTELY IMPERATIVE THAT ONE MUST BE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN AS TO THE SOURCE OF THE DIRECT REVELATION.** It is also vital to be sure, via personal confirmation of the Lord to you, that leaders are acting under the direction of the Lord. **AS the example quoted above from 1st Kings so powerfully shows, acting on assumptions about someone else's presumed authority without verifying those assumptions with the Lord can prove dangerous, even fatal.**

Other factors to consider carefully when seeking to determine the source of spiritual communications include the following. One must carefully evaluate supposed "revelations" from unknown sources with the existing knowledge and testimony that we have.

Finally, we would urge that one master, that is fully understand, the principles of discerning spirits which the Lord has given us in three different sources. The first source is found in D&C 129, which we quote in its entirety.

D&C 129:1-9 There are two kinds of beings in heaven, namely: Angels, who are resurrected personages, having bodies of flesh and bones -

2 For instance, Jesus said: Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

3 Secondly: the spirits of just men made perfect, they who are not resurrected, but inherit the same glory.

4 When a messenger comes saying he has a message from God, offer him your hand and request him to shake hands with you.

5 If he be an angel he will do so, and you will feel his hand.

6 If he be the spirit of a just man made perfect he will come in his glory; for that is the only way he can appear -

7 Ask him to shake hands with you, but he will not move, **because it is contrary to the order of heaven for a just man to DECEIVE**; but he will still deliver his message.

8 If it be the devil as an angel of light, when you ask him to shake hands, he will offer you his hand, and you will NOT FEEL ANYTHING; you may therefore detect him.

9 These are three grand keys whereby you may know whether any administration is from God.

The third source is in the Prophet Joseph's extraordinary editorial entitled "Try the Spirits" from The Times and Seasons on April 1, 1842 about the discerning of spirits. It is found in the documentary History of the Church at Vol 4, pgs. 571-581 and is restated in The Teachings of The Prophet Joseph Smith at pgs. 202-215. THE FULL TEXT OF THE LATTER IS IN THE APPENDIX.

Incidentally, the fact that the Prophet Joseph took the time and effort to write out these thoughts and have them printed as an editorial in this major church publication powerfully illustrates the magnitude of the problems that the saints were then having with extraordinary efforts of the adversary to delude and deceive, a point emphasized in the opening paragraph of the editorial. As one grows spiritually it is totally reasonable to expect to hear of or even personally experience more and more of such efforts by the adversary.

CONCLUSIONS: Our conclusions in this area include that one MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING RULES:

Rule Number One is "CLING TO THE IRON ROD; PRAY, PRAY, PRAY; AND ALWAYS USE THE KEYS GIVEN FOR DISCERNMENT!"

Rule Number Two is "NEVER, NEVER, NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF THE ADVERSARY TO DECEIVE AND DELUDE!"

Rule Number Three is "WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS FOLLOW RULE NUMBER ONE!"

PART IV

As we have labored to round out our discussion of becoming a changed people, the need to include this section became clear. Just as people are unable to accept the restored gospel when they are struggling just to survive, so also it is virtually impossible for individuals ensnared in marital difficulties to strive for the mighty change. **It appears to us that one of the greatest tools used by the adversary to impede and even prevent entire families from comprehending and rising to greater light is to attack and whenever possible break up families. For that reason we have included the following material.**

We are aware of some who have been strengthened by this information and been able to pull back from the very brink of a divorce. **It is our hope that many more may so benefit.**

CHAPTER 26

DELUSIONS AND DIVORCE - A SCRIPTURAL POSITION

A study of the scriptures on the source of delusions which cause us to make wrong choices. And consideration of the role delusions play in the current plague of divorces in violation of scriptural teachings concerning divorce.

A delusion, as discussed herein, is a sincere belief in lies or untruths. To delude a person is to mislead someone into believing what is not true. It is to convince a person to trust or accept a misrepresentation of facts for the sole purpose of persuading them to follow a wrong course of action. Thus, to be deluded is to believe a lie or untruth. Following is a discussion of the scriptures concerning the sources of such lies or untruths and the processes by which men come to believe such untruths and thereby become deluded.

There are many ways in which a person can be deluded. Friend and foe alike can deceive or delude. Relatives and associates may delude. The Devil and his angels are especially good at it. Each of these sources of delusion will be addressed, beginning with delusions caused by Satan.

DELUSIONS CAUSED BY SATAN: A well known example of Satan-caused delusions occurred in 1828 while Martin Harris was acting as scribe for Joseph Smith in translating the Book of Mormon plates. Martin's wife pressured him to prove what he was doing. Martin persuaded Joseph to ask the Lord to allow him to take the 116 page manuscript to his wife as evidence that he was acting as a scribe. Joseph inquired of the Lord and was twice told that Martin could not take the translation. After the third request, the Lord agreed to let Martin take the 116 pages based on a covenant that Martin would show the pages to only a few specifically agreed upon persons. Martin, of course, broke the covenant and consequently lost the manuscript. Joseph then lost both the privileges of translating and of retaining possession of the Urim and Thummim and the plates. Later that summer the Lord gave Joseph Smith a revelation revealing the nature of Satan's cunning plan to deceive mankind through his delusions. The Lord said that Satan's delusion is based upon a claim that men "lie to deceive."

... Satan has GREAT HOLD upon their hearts; he STIRRETH them up to iniquity against that which is good. And their hearts are corrupt and full of wickedness and abominations; and they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil; therefore, they will not ask of me.

...

Satan STIRRETH them up that he may LEAD THEIR SOULS TO DESTRUCTION ... yea, he stirreth up their hearts to anger: [Satan tells the wicked to] deceive and lie in wait to catch that ye may destroy: behold this is no harm ... he flattereth them and telleth them that it is no sin to lie that they may catch a man in a lie that they may destroy him. D&C 10:12-43

The Lord tells Joseph that Satan had put it into the hearts of those who had possession of the manuscript to alter the words so that they may "destroy this work." The Lord says that this is the devil's cunning plan and that he had put it into their hearts that by lying they could prove that Joseph only pretended to translate. Satan's method to get people to follow his delusion is to gain control of their hearts and to stir their hearts up to anger. Once Satan has control of one's heart because of wickedness, he then proceeds to lie to that person. In Joseph's case, Satan told the people who had the manuscript that "HE HATH DECEIVED YOU." Therefore, Satan bases his delusion on the claim that the person whom he wishes to destroy is a deceiver. By this method Satan gets them to do what he wants done.

Satan told these people that Joseph had lied and had only pretended to translate. Satan hardens "the hearts of people to stir them up to anger against you that they will not believe my words." In concocting this evil design (delusion) based on lying, Satan planned

to overthrow Joseph's testimony in this generation. Of course, the Lord overthrew the plan of Satan and said that His wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil.

Another recent example of Satan creating "delusions to deceive" is the highly publicized actions of Mark Hoffman in forging the "Salamander letter" and other pseudo-historical documents. Other examples of Satan's activities to create delusions are the claims that (1) the Spaulding manuscript is the source of the Book of Mormon, (2) the First Vision came from Satan, and (3) Mormons are not Christians.

In 1 Nephi 13 in the Book of Mormon the Lord revealed to Nephi that following the death of the twelve apostles, Satan would found a "great and abominable church" among the Gentiles. Vs 26 Through this organization Satan would create a delusion to deceive the world into believing false doctrines. To accomplish this Satan stirred up the hearts of those he "holds" to:

Take away from the Gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain precious and also many covenants of the Lord. And all this have they done that they might pervert the right ways of the Lord, that they might blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men. Vs 26-27

Nephi was shown that after the plain and precious things were taken away from the Bible that it would go unto all nations of the Gentiles and that exceeding great many do stumble, yea insomuch that Satan hath "an great power over them." Vs 29

We have come to a keen awareness that the single most significant "plain and precious truth" which the Adversary has succeeded in removing from the Bible is information about what it means to be born again through the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost. In the current Bible there are only a few sparse accounts left in the New Testament, mostly in Acts, of people receiving the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost and a few references to people being "filled with the Spirit." The most well known of these is of course the events on the day of Pentecost. Because the information on the true "born of the Spirit" experience is so sparse, the Adversary has been able to deceive many into truly bizarre practices. In our view, these false activities of the Adversary account for much of the unusual phenomena found among charismatic, sometimes called "holy roller", groups.

What is truly sad, and a powerful witness of how much the Adversary truly hates the true doctrine of the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, is that he has come very close to eliminating it from the awareness of virtually all of those who accept the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine & Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price as scripture.

While the scriptures have not been altered, the lack of understanding of the doctrine among the members, including the leadership, has made it very difficult for individuals to understand the powerful scriptures on the baptism of fire found throughout the four standard works of scripture. This is the reason why we have written this book. It is also the principal reason why it contains so much material, because of the need to overcome embedded attitudes and perceptions so that readers may finally see **these profound truths, which are in very fact the very heart and core of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

In summary, delusions from Satan occur when he gains control, no matter how subtly or undiscerned, of the hearts or minds of men HARDENING their hearts, stiffening their necks, darkening their minds, blinding their eyes and stopping their ears to God's truths. The purpose being that the Devil "may lead their souls to DESTRUCTION." D&C 10:22

MAN-CAUSED DELUSIONS: A second way that delusions originate is by man himself. Joseph Smith at one time said that revelation comes from God, man, and the Devil. Paul says that men receive not the love of truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thess 2:8-12 Because of this man himself creates his own self-delusions, self-justification, or rationalizations for taking a wrong course of action by deluding himself into believing that it is

right. The scriptures give us many examples of and many different motives for man-caused or self-delusions.

In the days of the original twelve apostles there was a conflict concerning the status of Gentile converts. Many of the Jewish believers felt that the Gentiles had to accept the Mosaic law before becoming members of the Church. It was not fashionable culturally for a Jew to even sit at the same table and dine with Gentiles. When Peter visited the church in Antioch he ate with the Gentiles, but when James sent some Jews from Jerusalem he (Peter) withdrew "and separated himself fearing them which were of the circumcision." Paul says he withstood Peter "to the face because he was to be blamed." Gal 2:10-12 Paul indicated that others followed Peter's example and "were carried away with their dissimulation" (pretentiousness). From this we realize that Peter was deluded into following a false custom out of fear of criticism or social pressure.

One of the remarkable features of the Restoration is God's revelation that man has free agency, that is, the innate ability to choose. FREEDOM is a consequence of free agency and is the divine right granted to us by God in this life to choose for ourselves from an almost endless list of alternative courses of action. This FREEDOM is given for the express purpose of allowing us to determine our eternal destiny; however, there are only TWO eternal destinies. The Lord says that the consequences of our choices result in either, (1) PEACE AND ETERNAL LIFE or (2) CAPTIVITY AND DESTRUCTION. 1 Nephi 14:7

One of the most startling concepts in Holy Writ is the DELIVERANCE PRINCIPLE based on man's God-given right of free agency. The Lord has revealed that we have the right to select our own delusions through the power of our free agency. Through the Spirit of the Holy Ghost, God guides our minds and feelings to see through our delusions and follow the path that leads to Eternal Life. The Lord, however, warns that, "His spirit will not always strive with man for that he also is flesh." Gen 6:3 This would indicate that the natural man is an enemy to God who refuses to "yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit." Mosiah 3:19 The consequence of this refusal to obey the promptings of the Holy Ghost is to experience the:

DELIVERANCE ... [over] to the HARDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS AND THE BLINDNESS OF THEIR MINDS UNTO THEIR BEING BROUGHT DOWN INTO CAPTIVITY. 1 Nephi 14:7

A classic example of the DELIVERANCE UP principle is found in 1 Samuel chapter 8 when the Lord allowed the Elders of Israel to follow their own bad choice (delusion) and change their form of government. The Elders of Israel met with the Prophet Samuel at Ramah and said, "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." This displeased Samuel but he went and prayed to the Lord about it. The Lord answered and said, "They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them ... They have forsaken me and served other gods." 1 Samuel 8:5-8 However, the Lord revealed to Samuel that He was willing to deliver them up to their delusion, but He told Samuel, "To protest solemnly unto them." The Lord told Samuel to warn the Elders of the consequences of their choice. The results would be the following: the king would (1) take their fields, (2) make them servants, (3) declare war, and (4) require their children to be instruments of war. Samuel also informed them that due to these oppressions Israel would "cry out to the Lord because of their afflictions." Samuel prophetically warned that when they cried out, "The Lord would not hear you in that day." 1 Samuel 8:11-18 The Elders of Israel refused to obey the voice of Samuel and said, "But nay, we will have a king over us that we may be like all the nations." 1 Samuel 8:19 Samuel rehearsed in the ears of the Lord through prayer their determination to follow their delusion. Subsequently, the Lord told Samuel, "Hearken unto their voice and make them a king." Vs 22 Consequently they were DELIVERED UP to the torments predicted by the Lord to which their subsequent history so vividly attests.

A poet has clearly written of God's respect for man's free agency in these words:

*Know this that every soul is free
To choose his life and what he'll be*

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*For this eternal truth is given
That God will force no man to Heaven.
He'll call, persuade, direct aright,
and bless with wisdom, love and light,
In nameless ways be good and kind,
But never force the human mind.*

The Lord obviously did not "force the human mind" of the Elders of Israel when they demanded a king, but "called, persuaded, and directed aright." **We should take warning that the Lord will deal with each of us in the same manner and deliver us to our own delusions after striving with us through His Spirit.** However, this sad fate will occur only if we resist the enticings of the Holy Ghost because of the **HARDNESS OF OUR HEARTS.** Paul, speaking of sinners, says that, "God gave them over (delivered) to a reprobate mind (depraved thoughts) to DO THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT CONVENIENT (proper)." Romans 1:28

Paul also says that delusions originate with men because they have "itching ears" and want to hear only things they agree with. In 2 Tim 4:3-4 Paul says:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables.

Paul refers to deluded people as being "bewitched ... that ye should not obey the truth." Gal 3:1 He also declared that some church members, "having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling and give heed to fables." 1 Tim 1:4,6 In 1 Tim 1:6 he asserts "others have given heed to seducing spirits." 1 Tim 4:1 He also declared that others have "erred concerning the truth, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim 3:5 He also states that "some profess that they know God but in their works they deny Him." Titus 1:16

DELUSIONS FROM GOD: The last source of delusions identified by the scriptures is the most disconcerting because it is delusions sent to us by God. This type of delusion is what I call a "last straw" delusion. It clearly appears from the scriptures that our Heavenly Father can become so unhappy with our performance or lack of performance that He will send us a tailor-made delusion. What! Why would God go to the trouble to delude anyone when there are so many demons and people that seem to be engaged in the work on a full time basis? Isn't it the major work of God to keep us from being deceived or deluded?

Let's see what Paul the Apostle had to say on this subject:

And then shall that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; BECAUSE they RECEIVED NOT the LOVE OF THE TRUTH, that they might be saved. And for this cause GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE: THAT THEY ALL MIGHT BE DAMNED WHO BELIEVED NOT THE TRUTH, but HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. 2 Thess 2:8-12

Are we to believe Paul? Does God send to the unrighteous "strong delusion that they should believe a lie?" Vs 11 Is it not easy to look at the uncountable contradictions in such fields as science philosophy and religion and realize that Paul is a very credible witness. The hardest part is to trace the origin of a delusion to its source. Do we have any idea how many delusions come from God? We do not; but, there is something that we definitely learn from Paul, namely attitudes that our Heavenly Father abhors. These attitudes are:

1. Not receiving or loving Truth; and

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2. Enjoying wickedness and unrighteousness.

Nephi also had something to say about not wanting any more from God:

Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and WE NEED NO MORE of the word of God, for WE HAVE ENOUGH! For behold, thus saith the Lord God: I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear to my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; for unto HIM THAT RECEIVETH I WILL GIVE MORE; and from them that shall say, WE HAVE ENOUGH, FROM THEM SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY EVEN THAT WHICH THEY HAVE. 2 Nephi 28:29-30

Not wanting to learn more of the things of God can cause us to lose what knowledge has already been given to us. This creates a vacuum. Does this vacuum remain empty? Or is it filled with a delusion from any one of a number of sources?

Isaiah tells us of the condition of his people in the year that King Uzziah died. He had a vision in which he saw the Lord. Then Isaiah wrote of his experience as follows:

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a PEOPLE OF UNCLEAN LIPS: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Isa 6:5

Isaiah is immediately filled with the spirit of repentance. A live coal is placed upon his lips by one of the seraphim, telling him that his iniquity is taken away, and that his sin is purged, or "forgiven" in today's language:

Then Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom will I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And He (the Lord) said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but UNDERSTAND NOT; and see ye indeed, but PERCEIVE NOT. MAKE THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE FAT AND MAKE THEIR EARS HEAVY, AND SHUT THEIR EYES: LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART, AND CONVERT, AND BE HEALED. Then said I Lord, HOW LONG? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly destroyed. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. Isa 6:8-12

It seems that this is one of the most incomprehensible assignments ever given to a prophet in the history of the world. Isaiah simply responded, "How long?" It is doubtful that Isaiah knew that the carrying of Israel captive into Babylon was approximately 138 years into the future.

The "why" of the assignment becomes clearer as the Lord again gives the following description of Israel's lifestyle:

Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also WILL CHOOSE THEIR DELUSIONS, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, NONE did answer, when I spake, THEY DID NOT HEAR; BUT THEY DID EVIL before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not. Isa 66:3-4

The scriptures tell us that the people did not want to serve the Lord. They walked in their own way, not wanting what the Lord had for them. The scriptures tell us that with this unholy attitude and behavior, they qualified to be deluded. And the Lord was not going to leave the delusions up to anyone else; He would choose the nature, kind and extent of their delusions. The Lord specifically stated, "I will choose their delusions." Vs 4

Is there another example in Holy Writ that supports this scriptural statement that God would send a delusion? Is there a record that this happened? Many will be shocked to learn that the answer is a resounding YES! The story is found in the twenty-second chapter of I Kings.

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The setting of this event is that Jehoshaphat is King of Judah. Ahab is king of Israel. There has been three years of peace between Syria and Israel, but the spoils of Ramoth in Gilead is awfully tempting to Ahab. He invites Jehoshaphat to go to war with him and Jehoshaphat agrees to go, but wants a confirmation from the Lord:

Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, SHALL I GO AGAINST RAMOTH-GILEAD TO BATTLE, OR SHALL I FORBEAR? And they said, GO UP, FOR THE LORD SHALL DELIVER IT INTO THE HAND OF THE KING. Vs 5-6

For some reason Jehoshaphat seems uneasy with the unity of all the prophets. Are they just currying favor with the king? He wonders if there isn't another prophet and asks:

Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah ... by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. Vs 7-8

Micaiah is in prison. Ahab instructs an officer to bring Micaiah from prison to satisfy the concern of Jehoshaphat. The officer tried to persuade Micaiah to go along with the rest of the prophets -- to prophesy nothing but good for Ahab, but Micaiah was unmoved:

And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak. Vs 14

On the way to the king's chamber, he changed his mind and decided to have a little fun with the king. When asked if they should go up to war against Ramoth-Gilead, he said:

Go and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.

All of the other prophets must have smiled at this, but Ahab wasn't smiling:

How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord? Vs 16

It is time for the truth. Micaiah speaks:

I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: [indicating that Ahab will be killed in battle] let them return every man to his house in peace. Vs 17

Ahab is incensed, saying:

Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? Vs 19

Micaiah speaks again. The vision must be told. Ahab must know of a certainty:

Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner and one said on that manner. And there came forth a lying spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail; go out and do even so; for all these have sinned against me. Now therefore, behold, the LORD HAS FOUND A LYING SPIRIT IN THE MOUTH OF THESE THY PROPHETS, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee. (underlining indicates JST revisions in II Chron. 18:21-22)

The king's anger at this point reached the boiling point:

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Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with the bread of affliction and with the water of affliction, until I come in peace. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me... Vs 27-28

Ahab did not want the truth. The prophets of Ahab did not want the truth. So, the Lord sent them all a delusion. The delusion was that they could enjoy the spoils of Ramoth-Gilead. They bought the delusion and went to war against Ramoth-Gilead. Ahab was killed in the battle. Vs 35 Micaiah was vindicated.

Perhaps the scriptural teachings that God would send a "strong delusion" needs personal and careful consideration! If we do not want to progress in light and truth, can we qualify for a delusion sent by God? In considering this fearsome question it may be well to ponder Jacob's description of an attitude (state of mind) of one of the tribes of Israel:

But behold, the Jews were a stiffnecked people; and they despised the words of plainness, and killed the prophets, and sought for things that they could not understand. Wherefore, because of their blindness, which blindness came by LOOKING BEYOND THE MARK, they must fall; for GOD HATH TAKEN AWAY HIS PLAINNESS from them, and DELIVERED unto them many things which they cannot understand, because they desired it. And because they desired it, GOD HATH DONE IT, THAT THEY MAY STUMBLE. Jacob 4:14

To briefly summarize, based on the quoted scriptures it appears that as a "last straw" God chooses men's delusions, sends men delusions and delivers things which cannot be understood to the unrighteous, meaning those who will not receive and love His truths. Does "looking beyond the mark" qualify a stiffnecked person to be deluded? Will God "deliver them up" to things they "cannot understand?" What is the final result of being deluded? The Lord says, "They will stumble."

To those who may be troubled by the concept that God sends us delusions, your puzzlement is understandable. All that can be said is that the scriptures cited here have been quoted accurately. If the preceding comments about them trouble you, can you find a different meaning?

SUMMARY. From the scriptures one can reasonably conclude that many delusions (remember - a delusion is a sincere belief in untruths or lies) result from being LUKEWARM about a commitment or being "neither hot nor cold." Rev. 3:16

The principles discussed concerning delusions obviously apply to every area of life. Today, as always, there are many who for one or more reasons are deluded into beliefs and then into actions that have serious consequences both now and eternally. We believe that a valuable component of defenses against being deluded is greater understanding of the circumstances in which one becomes vulnerable to delusions from whatever source.

One tragically prominent example of delusions that have serious eternal consequences is the many delusions that men and women create for themselves in justifying a divorce. This can be called a "DIVORCE DELUSION."

BECAUSE THE "DIVORCE DELUSION" IS SO PERVASIVE, CAUSES SUCH A TERRIBLE AMOUNT OF LONG-TERM PAIN AND SUFFERING, AND PERMANENTLY HARMS EVERY MEMBER OF EVERY FAMILY BROKEN BY DIVORCE, THE BALANCE OF THIS CHAPTER EXAMINES THE SCRIPTURES ON MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE.

THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS ON DIVORCE AND MARRIAGE

The following was originally written for a few people who were in the throes of a dissolution, which they had initiated, of their temple marriages. None of those cases were the "rare case" where the Lord through the Spirit had either directed or approved the divorce. Our objective was to be so clear that no one could misunderstand or fail to see the Lord's scriptural commandments on marriage and divorce in the hope that they might see the great risks and correct their course before the marital damage was beyond repair.

As is always the case, some heard the message and changed course and others did not.

If you were truly responsible for a divorce then it would appear that your ONLY safe course is FULL repentance as explained in Parts I through III. In our view true responsibility for a divorce lies with the spouse (1) that unrighteously brought the divorce proceeding in the absence of either adultery or the Lord's approval of the divorce, (2) that committed adultery or, (3) that committed other behavior so grievous that the Lord directed or approved the divorce by their companion.

If your marriage is in trouble or if you are in the throes of a divorce then it is our prayer that the following will be helpful to you, your companion and your family, especially if yours is a temple marriage.

Now a few words about "the rare case", or those relatively rare situations where the spirit has plainly told one or both partners, often including priesthood leaders, that a divorce was the right course. Obviously we can not and do not quarrel with those situations, just as Nephi did not argue when he was instructed to kill Laban. However, we do think it worth noting that Nephi did everything he could under the circumstances to be sure that his inspiration was from the correct source and that he clearly understood what the spirit was directing him to do and the reason for it. If you feel that you are such a "rare case" then it would seem to be essential to make sure that you are not deluded by doing all you know how to do to satisfy yourself that your inspiration is from the right source. REMEMBER, REMEMBER that the Lord may finally grant you your own delusion by telling you what you want to hear if you will not hear and obey the truth. What we are saying is that it would seem to be the prudent course to be very certain and careful that you clearly understand your inspiration in light of what the Lord has told us about His laws concerning marriage and divorce as discussed below.

THE LORD'S TEACHINGS ON DIVORCE: Scripturally the Lord has clearly and repeatedly stated that divorce is suffered (allowed) by Him and by the Father in the event of FORNICATION (INFIDELITY). Matt 5:32 **But, even though the Lord has permitted divorce, such permission does not supercede His counsel to forgive and to mend the marriage. A powerful example of such forgiveness will be given later.**

In Christ's day divorce was common for any reason, just as it is today. Today the current popular view is "If it doesn't work, get out." In Christ's day there were two camps of opinion - those who said for any reason and those who said only on the grounds of infidelity. The Pharisees approached Christ on the subject and asked Him "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Christ answered them from a scriptural position and not according to the law of the land or the customs of that day. He quoted a verse from Genesis, saying, A man shall leave father and mother and CLEAVE to his wife." He then summarized, "WHAT THEREFORE GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER." By this Christ was stating that men and women were to marry and no provision was made for divorce in the beginning. But, the Pharisees then asked, If this were true, then why did Moses allow a "writing of divorcement and to put her away?" Christ told them that it was because of "the hardness of your hearts" that Moses "suffered (allowed) you to put away your

wives: but from the beginning it was not so." Then Christ gave the summum bonum to the whole question:

And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for FORNICATION, and shall marry another, com mitteth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth com mit adultery. Matt 19:9

The Apostles were shocked to realize there were no grounds for divorce except fornication, and exclaimed, "If the case of a man be so with his wife, It is not good to marry." Christ followed up their perplexed reaction by saying "ALL MEN CANNOT RECEIVE THIS SAYING, SAVE THEY TO WHOM IT IS GIVEN." Matt 19:11 By this we realize that there was a higher standard of commitment to marriage required of members of His Church. And as a result of the restoration of the fullness of the Gospel, we realize that the eternal covenant of marriage in the Lord's House requires such a commitment.

The marriage lifestyle of the Jews in Christ's day was very permissive. They entered marriage for "fun and games" and as soon as "the fun ended" the marriage dissolved so that they could remarry for more of the same. Considering this common practice, it is no wonder that the Sadducees asked Christ if a woman had married seven husbands, "in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven ... ?" Matt 22:23-29 Christ curtly told them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Vs 29 **Can we be so blind as to fail to see that ALL THESE RULES HAVE NOT CHANGED FOR US!**

In ancient documents found at Qumron and Nag Hammadi it is unequivocally clear that eternal marriage was practiced by the Church in the days of the Apostles. In fact, from these documents we learn that after the resurrection Christ clearly taught the ordinance of eternal marriage was to be performed in a mirrored room known as the "bridal chamber." In conjunction with this covenant of eternal marriage, those who honored the conditions of the covenant were promised that they would have "seed forever and that the husband and wife would never be separated."

Unfortunately, in our society today far too many divorces are occurring as a result of self-delusion and false justifications. Are these delusions originating with the individual, the devil, or God? The answer to this question becomes clearer by considering what instructions the Lord has given us concerning adultery.

A careful perusal of the scriptures reveals that there are four types of adultery.

I. Straight Adultery. The first type of adultery is unfaithfulness to one's spouse. Through Moses ancient Israel was charged in the ten commandments, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14 In Leviticus 20:10 this type of adultery is defined as follows:

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife [are called] the adulterer and the adultrress....

We are warned in Proverbs of the consequences, thusly:

But whosoever com mitteth adultery with a wom an lacketh understanding: he that doeth it DESTROYETH HIS OWN SOUL. Proverbs 6:32

II. Remarrying Adultery. The second type of adultery is remarrying while a spouse who has been put away is still living. On this Paul instructs:

For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband LIVETH, she be m arried to another m an, she shall be called an ADULTRESS: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adultrress, though she be married to another man. Romans 7:2-3

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Christ was equally emphatic in warning about this type of adultery. During the final six months of His ministry, while teaching in Perea He condemned the marriage practices of the Pharisees in these words:

Wo unto you, ye adulterers. And they reviled Him again, being angry for the saying that they were adulterers. But, He continued saying, 'whosoever putteth away his wife, and marryeth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marryeth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery.' Luke 16:21-23 JST

Christ addressed divorce and remarriage in the Sermon on the Mount, thusly:

It hath been said, 'whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give his wife a writing of divorcement.' But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery, and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. Matt 5:31-32

From this scripture and others cited, it is clear that fornication is THE "ESCAPE CLAUSE", or divinely-tolerated ground for divorce authorized in the scriptures.

According to THE LORD'S OWN WORDS in both ancient and modern (D&C 42:74 & 80) scriptures, **THE LAWS OF REMARRYING ADULTERY ARE STILL IN EFFECT TODAY.** While it may be true that the earthly administrators of the Lord's church do not NOW impose church sanctions on those who are guilty of remarriage adultery, those spouses who seek divorce on grounds other than adultery should VERY CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE SPIRITUAL CONSEQUENCES TO THEM of their action; because IT IS ABSOLUTELY TRUE THAT SHOULD THE PARTNER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DIVORCE REMARRY, **IN THE LORD'S EYES THAT PERSON IS GUILTY OF ADULTERY, forgiveness for which does not come at all easily!!!**

This law of Remarrying Adultery also raises the sober question of who bears the responsibility in the eyes of the Lord for any remarriage adultery later committed by an UNRIGHTEOUSLY put away companion. We acknowledge that the views here stated are our OPINION. Having said that, we offer the opinion that most if not all of the weight of that falls on the former spouse that broke their covenants and wrongfully terminated the prior marriage. The scriptural authority for this view is found in the Savior's statement in Matt 5:31-32 that "...whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, CAUSETH HER to commit adultery." Here, the Lord clearly recognizes that the CAUSE of the remarriage adultery lies with the husband that unrighteously put away his wife. To the best of our knowledge nowhere in any of the scriptures does the Lord place moral responsibility for any sin on an unwilling or unconsenting individual. In fact, in all situations that we are aware of the Lord places responsibility with the real cause. For that reason, when He says "Wo unto you ye adulterers" in Luke 16:21-23 we are strongly inclined to the view that the reason for the "Wo" is because the covenant breaker also pays the price for the innocent spouse's technical remarriage adultery. This thought occurred after much pondering on this question as we worked on this chapter and it makes sense to us.

III. Wanton Eye Adultery. The third type mentioned in the scriptures is mental or wanton eye adultery. Christ spoke of this, saying:

Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. Behold, I give unto you a commandment that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart, for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things wherein ye will take up your cross than that ye should be cast into Hell. JST Matt 5:30-31

IV. "Whoring After Other Gods" Adultery. The fourth type of adultery is worshipping other gods. The Lord says He is the husband and Israel is the wife. He regards His covenant

relationship to Israel as a marriage. When Israel went whoring after other gods, He proclaimed them to be adulterers. Jer 3:6-8, 14

To avoid the consequences of committing adultery, members of the church, and especially those with temple marriages, who are contemplating divorce ought to carefully consider the gravity of divorce. They ought to review thoughtfully and prayerfully the Lord's unequivocal instructions on marriage and divorce as clearly set forth in the scriptures. Because of not only the moral consequences, but also the long-term injury to every family member, it is possible that one is in danger of seriously jeopardizing his or her eternal reward by following a delusion about divorce. Divorce is clearly one of those cases in which the Lord might visit "the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me (are disobedient)." Deut 5:9 Couples should be aided in overcoming the deception of their delusion in believing that divorce is a proper solution. Every righteous means and counsel should be given to those contemplating divorce.

On the express subject of divorce, the scriptures talk about a wife "treacherously departing from her husband." Jeremiah 3:20 The prophet Malachi taught the Lord "HATETH PUTTING AWAY (divorce)." Malachi 2:16 The Savior taught "What God hath put together, let no man put asunder." Mark 10:9 Paul said "Let not the husband put away his wife." 1 Cor. 7:11

On February 9, 1831 Joseph Smith received section 42 of the Doctrine and Covenants, known as the "law of the Church". The Lord gave Joseph His law concerning divorce and desertion in the following words

Behold, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever person among you, having put away their companions for the cause of FORNICATION, or in other words, if they shall testify before you in all lowliness that this is the case, ye shall not cast them out from among you; but if ye shall find that any person have left their companions for the sake of adultery, and they themselves are the offenders, and their companions are living, they shall be cast out from among you. And again I say unto you that ye shall be watchful and careful, with all inquiry, that you receive none such among you if they are married. D&C 42:74-76

In this "Law of the Church" the Lord makes it clear that divorce is "suffered" (allowed) by Him on the grounds of FORNICATION! He also declared that desertion for the cause of adultery was grounds for excommunication. Vs 75-76 In today's permissive climate this may seem harsh, but **it appears that the Lord is striving to FORESTALL divorce and is strongly encouraging, if not commanding people to solve their problems.**

From these scriptures it also seems clear that the Lord is commanding couples to work hard to overcome any delusions that divorce is a solution to problems in a marriage. Malachi spoke of the "tears and weeping and crying that covers the altar of God" because men have dealt TREACHEROUSLY with their wives by divorcing them. He cautioned the Elders of Israel that God was:

A witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt TREACHEROUSLY (by getting a divorce): yet is she thy companion and the wife of thy covenant." Malachi 2:14

Then the Lord through Malachi asked the question, "And did not He make thee one? ... And wherefore one?" He then answered His own question by saying, "That He might seek a GODLY SEED. Therefore, take heed to your spirit and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, sayeth that he HATETH PUTTING AWAY (divorce)." Malachi 2:13-16

Christ agreed with the strict position of Malachi on divorce by saying: "I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Matt 5:32 Christ told the

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Pharisees while in Perea, "Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another she commits adultery." Mark 10:11-12 Matthew adds that the Savior put in an "escape clause" by declaring that divorce was permissible IF FORNICATION was involved. Matt 19:9 The Greek word for fornication in the New Testament is porenia", which means "sexual unfaithfulness."

On the central subject of marital relations between a couple (a common source of complaints and friction), Paul instructs as follows:

Let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due BENEVOLENCE (conjugal rights) and likewise also the wife unto her husband. The wife hath not rule of her own body but the husband and likewise also the husband have not power of his own body but the wife. DEFRAUD (deprive) ye not one another except it be with consent for a time that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again (have conjugal relations), that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (lack of self control). 1 Cor 7:2-5

Paul also offered the pragmatic advice to those who were not married, that "if they can not contain (exercise self control) let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn." 1 Cor 7:9 Joseph changed the words "to burn" to read "that any should commit sin." Paul continued to say that "Marriage is honorable in all, and the BED UNDEFILED: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Heb 13:4 In the Book of Mormon Jacob counsels, "Husbands LOVE your wives ... and wives LOVE your husbands." Jacob 3:7 The Lord told Joseph Smith in D&C 42:22, called the "Law of the Church": "Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart" and in D&C 49:58 that "marriage is ORDAINED of God."

It clearly appears from these powerful scriptures that men and women should love each other, cleave to each other, be one flesh and that marriage is ordained of God and should not be put asunder. Paul taught) "Neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man IN THE LORD." 1 Cor 11:11 Peter taught that the man and woman are "heirs together of the grace of life." 1 Peter 3:7 We are powerfully instructed by the Lord in Section 131 of the Doctrine and Covenants that there is a new and everlasting covenant of marriage and that those who honor the conditions of the covenant will inherit exaltation or the highest degree in the Celestial Kingdom. These verses state, "In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood (meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage) and if he does not, he cannot obtain it." D&C 131:1-3

The Lord also says that:

If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it be sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of Promise ye shall come forth in the first resurrection and shall INHERIT thrones, kingdoms, principalities and powers, dominions, all heights and depths ... it shall be done unto them in all things whatsoever my servant hath put upon them, in time, and through all eternity; and shall be of FULL FORCE when they are out of the world; and they shall pass by the angels and the Gods which are set there, to their EXALTATION AND GLORY in all things as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fullness and continuation of the seeds forever and forever and then shall they be Gods because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue then shall they be gods, because they have all power. D&C 132:19-20

How can a marriage be of "full force" in the world to come if a couple has deluded themselves into justifying a divorce in this world? The Lord, speaking of marriages not approved by him, are "not by me, or by my word... is not sealed, ... then it is NOT VALID NEITHER OF FORCE when ye are out of the world because they are NOT JOINED by me; when they are out of the world it CANNOT BE RECEIVED there because the angels and the gods are appointed there by whom they CANNOT PASS." D&C 132:18 The Lord goes on to

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say that such people remain "SEPARATELY AND SINGLY WITHOUT EX ALTATION in their saved condition to all eternity and are not gods but are angels of god forever and ever." D&C 132:17 The Lord further says that "their covenant of marriage is NOT OF FORCE when they are dead and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are NOT BOUND by any law when they are out of the world. D&C 132:15 The Lord concludes **"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE NOT BY ME SHALL BE SHAKEN AND DESTROYED."** Ibid, vs 14

How carefully and cautiously one should approach the consideration of divorce in light of the sacredness and importance God has placed on marriage in the holy scriptures that He has so painstakingly given us!! How many marriages will be shaken and destroyed because of self-delusion and self-justification and false rationalizations? Tragically, today the answer to this sad question is "Far too many."

One other consideration should be mentioned. Church policy currently allows for temple marriage cancellation for grounds other than fornication (infidelity). However, we should hasten to say that HARDNESS OF THE HEARTS of church members is involved. Christ said that a writing of divorcement was allowed in the days of Moses. He declared, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered (allowed) you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so." Matt 19:8 Until recently Bishops and Stake Presidents were strongly cautioned against advising couples to divorce. Present day instructions on divorce to Bishops and Stake presidents is to give counsel as directed by the spirit.

Is it not clear that the current attitude towards divorce of "If it does not work, get out" is offensive to God? The Lord has spoken so emphatically against divorce in all of the scriptures, both ancient and modern. His revelation is given us for our instruction, guidance, and benefit. Are we not failing to love the truths He has given us if we choose to follow our own reasoning rather than obey His clear scriptural instructions to us? By ignoring His directions are we not candidates for delusions?

President Lee taught we need to teach our people to find their answers in the scriptures."Ensign, Dec. 1972, pg 3. President Kimball reinforced this by saying, "We must study the scriptures ... and let them govern our lives" Ensign, Sept. 1976, pg 5. On this critical subject, the Lord says,

And your minds in times past have been DARKENED BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF because YOU HAVE TREATED LIGHTLY THE THINGS YOU HAVE RECEIVED And THEY SHALL REMAIN UNDER THIS CONDEMNATION UNTIL THEY REPENT. D&C 84:54,57

The hurt, bitterness, and anger between a couple can result in a hardening of the hearts and "darkening of the mind" of one or both partners. Once this occurs, the delusion of divorce as a solution becomes prevalent. In this state of mind each partner should prayerfully seek to repent and ask the Lord to help them soften their heart so that they can have the guidance of the Spirit. All too often the HARDNESS OF HEART AND STIFFNECKEDNESS remains unaltered so that self-delusions, false justifications, and erroneous rationalizations become one or both partners personal reasons for divorce. Contrast the heart hardened and the mind blinded by delusion with the Godly wisdom described by James in these words from Holy Writ:

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. James 3:17

Remember, Godly wisdom from above leads to repentance and softening of the heart which is essential before one can truly have the light of Christ as a guide. The Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith that obedience leads to Godly "wisdom and treasures of knowledge" in these words: "And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures. D&C 89:18-19. **How urgently do people traveling the sorrowful road to divorce need "wisdom and treasures of knowledge!"**

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Speaking of the power of the Word of God to heal hearts and minds, Jacob instructs, "Come up hither to hear the pleasing word of God, yea, the word which HEALETH THE WOUNDED SOUL." Jacob goes on to say there have been "daggers placed to pierce their souls and wound their delicate minds." Jacob 2:8-9

Unless there is a spirit of forgiveness in the heart of each hurt partner, delusion may well lead to a shaking and destruction of the marriage. The Lord emphasizes the necessity of a forgiving heart by commanding us:

I, THE LORD, WILL FORGIVE WHOM I WILL FORGIVE, BUT OF YOU IT IS REQUIRED TO FORGIVE ALL MEN. D&C 64:10

The Lord further counsels us to approach troubles with a "broken heart and a contrite spirit":

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whosoever cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit him will I baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost (give answers to your prayers, expose delusions, heal wounds). 3 Nep 9:20

The foolishness of following "popular points of view" or whatever the current "consensus" might be is powerfully denounced by Paul thusly:

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2

Since we are all "under the glance of the PIERCING EYE OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD" (Jacob 2:10.), nothing short of an attitude of unconditional love can truly "transform and renew the mind." Conditional love is destructive. One must "pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart that they may be filled with this love." Moroni 7:48 This kind of love that comes as a gift from the Holy Ghost through prayer has the following characteristics: (1) suffers long (is patient), (2) is kind, (3) envieth not (is not jealous), (4) vaunteth not itself (is not boastful), (5) is not puffed up (is not arrogant), (6) becometh not unseemly (is not rude), (7) seeketh not its own (is unselfish), (8) is not easily provoked (is not resentful), (9) thinketh no evil (does not keep a record of wrongs), (10) bears all things, believes all things, hopeth all things and endures all things, (11) charity never faileth. I Cor 13:4-8 From this it is obvious that **they do not possess charity who are deluded into believing that divorce is the correct solution to problems in a marriage!** Are quarreling or estranged couples full of the pure love of Christ? Unquestionably the answer is No! James says:

But if ye have bitter envying, and strife (contention) in your hearts ... lie not against the truth ... for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. James 3:14-16

Paul, speaking to members of the Church, declared that they should "be perfectly (maturely) joined together in the same mind (attitude) and in the same judgement (decisions)." I Cor 1:10

To emphasize that these are in fact eternal truths that really work we now offer a real example that powerfully emphasizes the point that even though Lord permits divorce in the case of adultery because of the hardness of our hearts, that grudgingly given permission does not supercede His desire that we forgive one another and mend the marriage.

Some twenty or more years ago, a young wife and mother engaged in repeated affairs, even flaunting them before her husband. One day the husband marched out to car of her latest fling, parked in front of the couple's home, pulled her out of the car and then and there issued the ultimatum that she either stop all such behavior immediately or their marriage was over. She chose to stop and with much effort, love and forgiveness, and undoubtedly the abundant blessings of the Lord, she fully repented and they rebuilt their love for

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each other. All who know or observe this couple now see true love and harmony between husband and wife and admire them as a most exemplary couple. Subsequently the husband has served as a Bishop.

While countless other similar examples that would fill volumes could be added here, hopefully the clear scriptural assurances from our Heavenly Father and this one example are sufficient to impress upon even the most deeply wounded heart the eternal truth that WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

The major ideas presented to this point have been:

1. A delusion is a deception based on lies which are sincerely believed.
2. The source of delusions may be the Devil, or man himself, or even God.
3. Satan gains control of the hearts of wicked men and sends them delusions so that he can lead them down to Hell.
4. The most foreboding consequence of man-selected delusions is that God will deliver him up to follow that self-deception and to be enslaved by the natural effects of that choice.
5. For those who love not His truths God may send to such people divinely chosen delusions.
6. God has given man his agency, and, therefore, man is free to choose, including choosing to follow devil-originated, man-created, or divinely-decreed delusions.
7. Divorce is an area in which delusions play a major role in motivating a false course of action.
8. Marriage is ordained of God. A temple marriage sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is essential for exaltation.
9. The Lord HATES divorce and has permitted it only because of the hardness of the hearts of those involved. Scripturally, the only stated ground under which the Lord permits divorce is adultery.
10. All of the Lord's laws of adultery, including the laws of remarriage, remain in full force and effect today.
11. Those contemplating divorce should very carefully consider long and hard the eternal consequences of a divorce and have confidence in the Lord's capacity and desire to help them heal their marriage.

We move next to the subject of what the scriptures tell US about the Lord's attitude towards those who follow delusions.

Concerning those of His children who through the exercise of their god-given right to choose (agency) choose to not follow His word and His spirit, but to follow delusions, the Lord warns that, "His fierce anger is kindled" against His children when their MINDS ARE BLINDED (darkened) and their NECKS STIFFENED and their "HEARTS HAVE WAX ED HARD, AND THEIR EARS ARE DULL OF HEARING AND THEIR EYES CAN NOT SEE AFAR OFF ... and have sought their OWN COUNSELS IN THE DARK (delusions)." Moses 6:27-28 The Lord concludes by solemnly warning, **"A HELL HAVE I PREPARED FOR THEM IF THEY REPENT NOT."** Moses 6:27-29; D&C 5:8

Nephi declared, "hardened hearts are past feeling" resulting in a rejection of the "still, small voice":

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He hath spoken unto you in a still small voice, but ye were PAST FEELING, that ye could not FEEL HIS WORDS. 1 Nep 17:45

Are quarreling, resentful couples traveling on the road to divorce "past each feeling other's words?" Can they feel the still small voice when it speaks? Nephi characterized those PAST FEELING as "swift to do iniquity, but slow to remember the Lord your God." 1 Nep 17:45

Nephi taught that people with "stiff-necks and high-heads" (proud, unrepentant) go astray or err because they are led by the "precepts of men":

They wear stiff necks and high heads ... because of pride ... they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are humble followers of Christ: nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men. 2 Nep 28:14

Nephi grieved because "the spirit stoppeth mine utterance... because of the stiffneckedness of men, for they would not search knowledge, nor understand great knowledge ... and it grieveth me." 2 Nep 32:7-8 How many people contemplating divorce wear stiff-necks and high-heads? Are they not unrepentant and hardened? Don't they let the PRECEPTS OF MEN fill their minds with justifications for divorce? Does their high-mindedness stop the Holy Ghost, Bishops or friends from speaking the truth (utterances)? The consequences of NOT BEING WILLING TO HEAR THE TRUTH are much UNNECESSARY suffering, pain and deep heart-ache.

Finally, what then is the solution or the remedy for delusions, for surely there has to be one. And there is. The Lord told Joseph Smith that "after much tribulation and temptation He would heal and convert if stiff necks and hard hearts" don't prevail:

After ... much tribulation, behold, I, the Lord, will feel after them and if they harden not their hearts and stiffen not their necks against me, they shall be converted and I will heal them. D&C 112:13

Surely embittered, angry spouses need HEALING AND CONVERTING. Are they not faced with much tribulation to temper their souls?

Should not disputing mates be "persuaded to repent" (change minds and actions)? 2 Nep 26:27 Should they not be born again? Alma 5:31 Liberty from suffering comes to all who repent. There must be a confession and forsaking. The Lord said, "He who has repented of all his sins, the same is forgiven." D&C 58:43 Should there not be complete forgiveness between each spouse? The frequency of forgiveness is taught by Moroni, "As oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven." Moroni 6:8 Should not this rule of frequent forgiveness apply between couples, especially troubled couples?

Paul taught that, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance (change) to salvation" - saving of a marriage. 2 Cor 7:10 The Lord says, "Men must repent or they cannot be saved." Should not disputing divorce-bound couples apply this rule? Even so there must be repentance or the marriage can not be saved. Should not spouses be LONG SUFFERING like the Lord so that "all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

The Lord cautions, "do not procrastinate the day of your repentance." Alma 34:32 **Should not couples facing divorce begin immediately to repent and not delay, else the destruction of their marriage and family surely follow?**

Chastening (suffering, affliction & tribulation) is part of the process that "they might repent." D&C 1:27 The Lord says, "those having knowledge, have I not commanded to repent." D&C 29:49 The Lord emphatically instructs that mankind are to repent of "pride and selfishness." D&C 56:8 Are not troubled couples hindered in their ability to reconcile because of pride and selfishness? Surely, the DIVORCE DELUSION can be broken by repentance!

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Jacob sums up the matter of repentance by saying:

BUT WO, WO UNTO YOU THAT ARE NOT PURE IN HEART, THAT ARE FILTHY THIS DAY BEFORE THE LORD; FOR EXCEPT YE REPENT THE LAND IS CURSED. Jacob 3:3

What will the land be cursed with? Could it be a plague of divorces, resulting in embittered mates, broken-hearted children, and shattered lives?

The Lord has declared the five faculties of man (heart, mind, necks, ears & eyes) must be in tune with Him or His spirit is grieved, thus withdrawing and delivering them over to their delusions. Hearts waxed gross (hardened), beat indeed - but can not feel the still, small voice. Ears dull of hearing, hear indeed - but can not understand. Eyes closed, see indeed - but can not perceive. Minds blinded, think indeed - but counsel in the dark without inspiration. Necks stiffened, stretch indeed - but will not bend in humility, repentance or reconciliation. Metaphorically speaking, are not couples trapped in the DIVORCE DELUSION suffering from heart-attacks, ear-aches, neck-lockage, blinded-eyes, and brain-stroke?

The Lord says that delusions (which are deceptions based on lies which are believed) are "handcuffs, chains, shackles, and fetters of Hell." He continues to say that, "lies are strongly riveted upon the hearts of men and fills the world with confusion and is growing stronger and stronger." D&C 123:7 Lies are the "mainspring of all corruption and the whole earth groans under the weight of its iniquity." (Ibid) The Lord says, "lying is an iron yoke and a strong band." vs 8 On the subject of lying James says:

Lying against the truth is wisdom descended not from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish. James 3:14-15

In I Colossians chapter 2, Paul also cautioned:

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain (empty) deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (teachings) of the world, and not after Christ. Vs 8

Is it not clear that much of the DIVORCE PLAGUE is due to the iron yoke of delusion based on vain deceits and teachings of the world.

The SIMPLE ANTIDOTE to these delusions and the deep, long lasting and exquisitely painful wounds of divorce IS FOUND IN THE WORD OF GOD.

Oh all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God and feast upon His love ... come up hither to HEAR THE PLEASING WORD OF GOD, YEA THE WORD WHICH HEALETH THE WOUNDED SOUL. Jacob 3:2

From this and other scriptures it is absolutely clear that THE PLEASING WORD OF GOD AND HIS LOVE will totally expose the DIVORCE DELUSION and HEAL WOUNDED SOULS.

The vital importance of preventing divorce through the healing of wounded souls is powerfully emphasized when one considers most carefully THE LORD'S SOLEMN COMMANDMENTS to His church on the subject of how His Church is to treat (1) divorced individuals or (2) adulterers as found in D&C Section 42 (called "the LAW OF THE CHURCH").

74 Behold, verily I say unto you, that whatev er persons among you, having PUT AWAY their companions FOR THE CAUSE OF FORNICATION, or in other words, if they shall testify before you in all lowliness of heart that this is the case, ye shall NOT cast them out from among you; [Is not the implication here that if the divorce was not due to the adultery of the companion the result should be different, or in other words they should be cast out?]

75 But if ye shall find that any persons have LEFT THEIR COMPANIONS for the sake of ADULTERY, and THEY THEMSELVES ARE THE OFFENDERS, AND THEIR COMPANIONS ARE LIVING, they SHALL BE CAST OUT from among you. [Don't both of these verses reconfirm the Lord's condemnation of the remarrying type of adultery?]

80 And if any man or woman SHALL COMMIT ADULTERY, he or she shall be tried before two elders of the church, or more, and every word shall be established against him or her by two witnesses of the church, and not of the enemy; but if there are more than two witnesses it is better.

81 But he or she shall be condemned by the mouth of two witnesses; and the elders shall lay the case before the church, and the church shall lift up her hands against him or her, that they may be dealt with according to the law of God. D&C 42:74-75, 80-81.

Can there be any doubt remaining that the Lord truly does hate divorce and that those responsible for divorce mightily displease Him?

We conclude, by coming full circle back to the starting point that the Lord does not approve of divorce, with Paul's unequivocal statement of the LORD'S COMMANDMENT ABOUT MARRIAGE:

10 And unto the married, I COMMAND, YET NOT I, BUT THE LORD, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. I Cor 7:10-11 (emphasis added)

CONCLUSION: The purpose of the more than one hundred hours of labor by the several people who have struggled to write out these thoughts and scriptures is to mightily encourage those who have been so hurt in their marriage as to either be considering or even be in the midst of a divorce to DEEPLY PONDER THE ETERNAL CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS ON YOUR OWN ETERNAL WELFARE AND THE WELFARE OF YOUR FAMILY in the hope that after sober reflection, and even with fasting and prayer, you and your spouse will clearly see that in all but the very rare case IT IS A DELUSION to think that divorce is a solution and will also see the great wisdom of reconciling and with the Lord's help rebuilding your love for each other. We have done our best so that you can clearly see from these scriptures that that is exactly what our Heavenly Father asks you to do. May it be so we humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

POSTSCRIPT: Included in this Chapter will be found EVERY WORD in all the standard works about marriage and divorce. It is extraordinarily rare in the scriptures to find the Lord saying that He hates anything. Yet, as a special emphasis of how important he considers marriage to be, He has told us that "HE HATETH PUTTING AWAY."

We are sensitive to the possibility that some who are victims of divorce may experience some pain as they read this. We sincerely regret this for it is in no way our purpose.

We are well aware that there are all kinds of horrible behaviors and all kinds of severely emotionally damaged people that make a marriage incredibly difficult or impossible. However, it is not possible to look to the scriptures and justify divorces on grounds other than adultery because He has simply not given us any other scriptural justifications for divorce. It seems obvious to us that no such list could ever be complete because of the infinite variety of circumstances. Whatever His reasons may be, to us it is clear that He requires that we take this critical matter to Him for case by case counsel and resolution. Only He knows all the facts and only He can bring about the necessary healing. **We can not say strongly enough that all such situations simply must be taken to the Lord for His counsel and guidance It is worth repeating again that with the Lord ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.**

ADDENDUM TO "DELUSIONS AND DIVORCE"

"Delusions and Divorce" was written in the first part of 1990 and revised slightly for inclusion here. Recently we discovered and read the following accounts of personal revelations to LDS women involving marriage. We were impressed to add these accounts because EACH ONE contributes an extraordinarily powerful witness of the eternal consequences of either honoring or breaking one's sacred covenants made in the holy Temples of our Lord.

The first four accounts are from an excellent book entitled "Opening The Windows of Heaven" by Carol Jeanne Ehlers and Vicki Jo Robinson, Hawkes Publishing Co., 1987, which is still in print. Although we have chosen not to emphasize any portions of these accounts, you perhaps may wish to do so.

ACCOUNT 1:

"I moved into an apartment when I was twenty-one years old. I was the baby of the family, had secured employment, and had moved in with my girlfriend. My parents had not been active for a number of years, although my father did consistently attend his Priesthood meeting. He enjoyed his coffee, but was generally a happy, honest, and hard-working individual, except when it came to his marriage. He has first married when he was only seventeen. Two babies later, this marriage ended in divorce. At the age of twenty-seven he re-married again. He was not active at this time either but twenty years later he and his wife were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple. The next few years were prosperous and happy for both of them. It was during this time that I was born. My mother slipped back into old habits and soon lost the desire to stay close to the church. The marriage deteriorated, she became increasingly more negative towards him and towards the church. My father endured the situation as best he could. He had vowed that he would never again divorce as long as there were dependent children. Soon after I moved I had a dream in which I saw my parents fighting, unkind words were exchanged and divorce was threatened by my father. Next, I heard and saw myself telling my father that he should not seek a divorce, that he would not be here on this earth for much longer and that if he honored his covenants that he had made in the temple to the end of his days, he would know joy in the next world. When I awoke, I could not believe how real the dream seemed. I called home to talk to my mother. She was crying and had indicated that she and my father had had a terrible fight the night before. As she shared what had been said, I recognized the exact content of my dream. I made arrangements to talk to my father about what I had experienced. I shared with him the dream. He accepted it as being from the Lord. He did not get a divorce. He became active, and within the year was able to attend my temple marriage. Although in good health, a short eleven months later he suffered a massive heart attack and died." Excerpted from "Opening The Windows of Heaven", page 46.

ACCOUNT 2:

"I was yet to receive a further progress report from my father. A number of years later, I had gone up to my bedroom to rock my two month old babe. I had turned out the light so the other children would not come, just to secure a sweet moment alone with my sweet infant daughter. As I nursed her, suddenly my room flooded with light and I saw my father standing before me. Standing with him were two others, female. One I knew was my sister, whom I had never met, for she died at the age of two, many years before I was born. She was a full grown spirit, and though I shouldn't have recognized her, I just seemed to know who she was. I did not know the other woman, but a statement came to my mind, not verbal, but a communicated thought, nonetheless. I was to know that my father would have the privilege of living in a family unit. He radiated joy. The whole experience was extremely brief, and I was so startled by the suddenness of it that I had startled the babe in my arms. I feel the inner peace and surety and my father will have the privilege of living in a completed family unit throughout the eternities because he

honored his covenants here in mortality. This blessing will be his even though his wife in mortality chose not to honor the covenants she had made in the Holy Temple of our Lord. She broke her covenants, rejected the holy garments of the priesthood, and turned from the Church. It appears that in so doing she has lost her claim upon my father, and will be replaced by another. Oh, that I could shout from the roof-tops, **'Upon the choices we make today, hang our eternity of tomorrows! I am so grateful to the Lord for progress reports from beyond the veil.'** Ibid, page 48.

ACCOUNT 3:

"Our marriage was being severely tested. My heart was breaking with disappointment over the actions of one I loved. I had wondered if I could have the strength necessary to forgive. I had studied the scriptures. I know it is required to forgive if we hope to have our own sins forgiven. I could say the words but could I feel them? Though my heart still seemed heavy, I submitted to my husband in love making. I did so because I felt my eternal salvation was more to be valued than my pride, and I did not want to lose the sealing ordinance requisite to my exaltation. I knew that if my husband proved eternally unworthy he would be replaced in the heavenly realm. So I made a deliberate choice to submit and trust in the God of heaven for my eternal happiness. As I did so, a vision, sharp and clear opened to my view. Two large doors swung open before me. It seemed I had passed a final test and by so doing had gained the promise of entry to eternal blessings." Ibid, page 50.

ACCOUNT 4:

"As I learn and grow in the things of the spirit, my heart rejoices in the simplicity of truth. I know now why the Holy Ghost and Jesus Christ are referred to as the first and second comforters. Having experienced at diverse times the euphoric sense of well-being when the Holy Ghost is manifest in my life, I further testify that the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the second comforter is a reality. After experiencing a time of deep grief, humiliation and pain so great I thought my heart could never be healed, feeling I could never love again, or look forward to my old age or even eternity; the Savior has brought me comfort by His words personally unto me concerning the anguish and pain caused by one I loved so much. He has spoken and has shown me of His power to refine and purify those who would turn from all uncleanness before Him ... and He has shown me things to come. I rejoice in God, and in His son, Jesus Christ and in the Holy Ghost, and in His grace, and the atonement and in the privilege of taking my turn upon an earth when the fulness of the gospel is available unto me. (It occurs to me that were we not allowed to suffer pain and anguish which seems beyond our own capacity to bear, we would never need to call upon His strength and never experience the joy and comfort of His presence in mortality.)" Ibid, pages 50-51.

ACCOUNT 5:

We conclude these accounts of personal revelations with a previously unpublished experience of another LDS woman. With her permission we share the following excerpt from her personal journal of an open vision received in October 1992.

"As I lay in bed, pondering the wonder of the love that I felt for my husband after thirty-six years of marriage, I began to burn with the Spirit. In ever increasing surges the sweet euphoric feeling of the attendance of the Holy Ghost intensified and I felt even my eyes and my ears begin to burn. It was a familiar signal to me that the Lord had something to teach me.

I then saw two beings, male and female standing before me in flaming fire ... glorious, perfected, resurrected companions. The words "Double witness" were given. I realize now how important both husband and wife are as examples and double witnesses of righteousness to the world, to their children, to their posterity, and to their own

exaltation. I cannot begin to describe the beauty of the beings who stood in majesty before me.

Then another word was given. It was 'Divorce.' Immediately there was a flash of lightning and a crack of thunder, and it seemed all heaven was pained. The countenances of the two beings who stood before me clearly revealed their overwhelming disapproval.

The scene changed and I saw a woman alone with her children in her home. It seemed adversarial forces were throwing her children against the walls. She tried to get them outside to safety, but there was destruction everywhere and mobs were waiting to plunder and to ravage. She cried out in her terror to her husband for protection. From a distance away I heard him say she had no claim upon him for she had divorced him.

It became clear to me that in the times to come, when the prophesied events of calamity and destruction are upon us, it will be critical to have the protection of a husband, even perhaps, not the best of husbands. I saw how foolish to put away a husband for light things and I saw how strongly the Lord feels about divorce. How thankful I was for the husband who lay by my side and how grateful I was that our relationship had endured, notwithstanding trials during which I had prayed for and received the Lord's strength to forgive and His capacity to love in spite of the pain inflicted by my companion. When the pain had been beyond my ability to bear, the Lord lovingly granted unto me His strengths and capacities, as He will to all who sincerely ask it. How infinitely worth it it has been, for with time and through the atoning blood of Christ, has come all the glorious promises to me and to my companion; including the appearances of the Lord, himself, who is the Second Comforter, **bringing the promises of eternal exaltation from His own mouth.**"

PART V

A discussion of obtaining the promise from God that one SHALL inherit eternal life, also known as having one's calling and election made sure.

CHAPTER 27

THE "MOST GLORIOUS PRINCIPLE" OF CALLING AND ELECTION

This is the third chapter on calling and election, the principle that Joseph Smith called "the most glorious principle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." See pg. 27-5, infra. The other two are Chapter 17 "The Promise" and Chapter 18 "Rest", each of those titles being synonyms for calling and election.

The Lord frequently uses synonyms. For example, there are in the scriptures more than one hundred different words, phrases, or names that refer to Jesus Christ, including such familiar ones as "Savior", "Redeemer", "Lamb of God", etc. This work has identified approximately a couple of dozen different synonyms for the born again experience, such as "baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost", "having clean hands and a pure heart", "converted", "sanctified", etc. Calling and election is yet another principle for which there are a number of synonyms in the scriptures.

The primary subject of this work has been the born again or baptism of fire experience. But, once one has received his or her remission of sins, the next major spiritual objective is to receive one's calling and election, which is one's own personal assurance of eternal life.

Our objectives in this Chapter include:

1. Showing that Calling and Election is an essential part of the restored Gospel and that many today have received and are currently receiving this most glorious blessing.
2. Presenting the best available information on it via key passages from both the scriptures and the Prophet Joseph Smith.
3. Explaining, to the best of our ability, HOW one obtains this blessing.

AWARENESS, SEEKING AND FINDING

One of the most important of all the principles governing spiritual growth is "ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." And how can one seek without an awareness of what to seek for? That is why we have sought to cover as thoroughly as we could what it really means to receive the Holy Ghost in the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost and thereby obtain one's remission of sins. But, as the original Nephi so forcefully states in 2 Nephi 31:17-19, upon receiving one's remissions of sins, one has only just entered in by the gate and just started upon the path that leads to eternal life.

Just as there is far more to receiving the Holy Ghost than is commonly understood, so also is there is much more to attaining the Celestial Kingdom than commonly thought. This is why we have added this Chapter on obtaining one's calling and election. While this promise can be lost through such acts as committing the "unpardonable sin", we are not going to delve into this negative aspect.

The process by which one progresses along the path to eternal life and then obtains that richest of all prizes ("Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich." D&C 6:7, 11:7) is to continue to ask, seek and knock, all the time listening for and obeying the personalized, individual directions of the spirit until at a point determined by the Lord, God grants the further endowment of a personal promise that you will have eternal life.

INDESCRIBABLY DREADFUL DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE RESURRECTION

We have observed among a great many church members a deeply held belief that one obtains the celestial kingdom by qualifying for and receiving all of the external ordinances, including baptism and temple marriage, and then simply "enduring to the end" by rendering such "good works" as faithfully attending meetings, fulfilling church callings, serving one or more missions, paying tithing, holding a temple recommend and regular temple attendance if possible, doing home/visiting teaching, having family home evening, keeping personal journals, doing genealogy & temple work for ancestors, reading the scriptures daily, having morning and evening personal and family prayers, having adequate food storage and emergency preparations, listening to the right kind of music, abiding by both the "don't's" as well as the "do's" of the word of wisdom, sustaining our priesthood leaders and following the brethren, keeping the Sabbath day holy, visiting and succoring the needy, etc., etc..

One of the fundamental messages we wish to convey is our understanding that "GOOD WORKS" ARE ESSENTIAL BUT ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR COMING COMPLETELY TO CHRIST! In fact, in one well known set of verses, **the Lord even condemns good works as "iniquity" in these words:**

*3 Nephi 14:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.
22 Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?
23 And then will I profess unto them : I NEVER KNEW YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YE THAT WORK INIQUITY.*

While this same scripture is found in Matthew 7:21-23, we have used here the Book of Mormon version because it was written for those in the last dispensation. Now comes the hard, even for some the unthinkable question. Is it possible that the "many wonderful works" that the Lord here calls "iniquity" COULD include missions; temple marriages; service as a Scout master, Bishop, Stake or Mission President, Relief Society President, or General Authority; etc.; etc.; etc? Inasmuch as this particular scripture was written expressly for the Latter Day Saints, since we are the only ones who would receive and read the book, **it seems to us that the very uncomfortable answer to this question can only be an unequivocal YES!**

As we discussed in detail in Chapter 5 on Righteousness, one's own reasons motivating the good works apparently govern how the Lord views such works. For example, works done to be seen of men or for personal glory are not righteousness to the Lord, while works done with an eye single to His glory and with a pure heart are far more righteous. However, we don't want to bog down here in a detailed discussion on the relative merits of variously motivated works. The main point we wish to make is that no matter how well motivated, it simply is not possible to "casserole one's way" into the Celestial Kingdom.

The Prophet Joseph supports this conclusion in a most disquieting statement on October 9, 1843 during his remarks on the demise of James Adams:

The disappointment of hopes and expectations at the resurrection would be indescribably dreadful. TPJS at top of pg. 325 & Documentary History of the Church, Vol 6, pp. 50-52.

On this same point Elder Marion G. Romney once said:

We might take a lesson from an account given by the Prophet of a vision of the resurrection in which he records that one of the saddest things he had ever witnessed was the sorrow of the members of the Church who came forth to a resurrection below that they had taken for granted they would receive. Improvement Era, #52, Dec. 1949, p. 754.

The "Most Glorious Principle"

These two unequivocal statements of the Prophet Joseph and Elder Romney make it clear that for those who are members of the LDS Church, **IGNORANCE OF THE LAW IS NO EXCUSE!** That is, unlike the Prophet's brother Alvin, whom the Prophet saw in the Celestial Kingdom (See D&C 109) even though Alvin had died before the Church was organized, Church members appear to be required to fulfill the full requirements of the law which they have received in the scriptures. That law, of course, being to come all the way to Christ through a complete baptism of both water and the spirit and then to obtain the objective ("end") of eternal life.

The Savior's reference in verse 21 above to **FAILING TO DO THE WILL OF MY FATHER IN HEAVEN** recalls the message of Chapter 4 ("Condemnation - Why We Are Under It - And How To Remove It). There we focused on the condemnation scripture of D&C 84:49-58, a key verse of which is this:

*57 And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, **BUT TO DO ACCORDING TO THAT WHICH I HAVE WRITTEN.***

We there concluded that we are individually and as a church under the condemnation and bondage of sin until we actually DO obtain our own remission of sins in the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost!

We offer these most uncomfortable thoughts for the purpose of making the point that such indescribably dreadful disappointment stems from failure to **DO THAT WHICH THE LORD HAS COMMANDED**. For those who want to avoid such unhappy results **it would seem wise to fully learn what it is we have been commanded to DO!**

Apparently the root cause of the misplaced expectations of those whom Joseph saw is a tragically wrong misunderstanding about the true qualifications for receiving the blessings of the celestial kingdom, including, quite likely, a misplaced faith in external ordinances and "good works." **In fact, it appears that those church members who will be so profoundly disappointed at the resurrection will be among those who drew near to the Lord with their lips but their hearts were far from him.**

To us, the bottom line is that the true desires of one's heart is really at the heart of cleansing the inner vessel through obtaining one's remission of sins and thereafter seeking and receiving one's calling and election.

JOSEPH SMITH ON "THE MOST GLORIOUS PRINCIPLE"

We have seen a number of different written presentations on "calling and election," some of them quite voluminous. Some have even sought to gather every word ever recorded on the subject by every Apostle or Prophet from the beginning of the restoration to the present. We find no need to burden readers with such mind-numbing repetition, as the essentials are really quite simple.

Following is virtually everything that the Prophet Joseph said on calling and election as compiled in the "Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith." We find it quite interesting that it was not until 1839 that Joseph first addressed the subject and then he did not return to the subject again for four more years. Most of his teaching on this subject was done in the last fourteen months of his life. His final words were given just six short weeks before his martyrdom. We are going to present his teachings chronologically and without highlighting so as not to impair your seeing and perceiving the full richness of the tapestry of truth Joseph wove for us on this most glorious principle.

The "Most Glorious Principle"

June 27, 1839

The Doctrines of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Eternal Judgment are necessary to preach among the first principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine of Election. St. Paul exhorts us to make our calling and election sure. This is the sealing power spoken of by Paul in other places.

13. In whom ye also trusted, that after ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory, that we may be sealed up unto the day of redemption. Ephesians, 1st chapter

This principle ought (in its proper place) to be taught, for God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know Him (who remain) from the least to the greatest. How is this to be done: It is to be done by this sealing power, and the other Comforter spoken of, which will be manifest by revelation.

There are two Comforters spoken of. One is the Holy Ghost, the same as given on the day of Pentecost, and that all Saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism. This first Comforter or Holy Ghost has no other effect than pure intelligence. It is more powerful in expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, though it may not have half as much visible effect upon the body; for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by the pure spirit of intelligence; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a new creation by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first might be far before the Gentile in pure intelligence. The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest, and perhaps understood by few of this generation. After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue on to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses. Note the 16, 17, 18, 21, 23 verses:

16 And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;

17 Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

...

21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

...

23 If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions - Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn. TPJS, pp. 149-151.

May 14, 1843 Excerpts from "Remarks Of The Prophet On The Death of Lorenzo D. Barnes"

The "Most Glorious Principle"

Now, there is some grand secret here, and keys to unlock the subject. Notwithstanding the apostle exhorts them to add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, etc., yet he exhorts them to make their calling and election sure. And though they had heard an audible voice from heaven bearing testimony that Jesus was the Son of God, yet he says we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place. Now, wherein could they have a more sure word of prophecy than to hear the voice of God saying, This is my beloved Son.

Now for the secret and grand key. Though they might hear the voice of God and know that Jesus was the Son of God, this would be no evidence that their election and calling was made sure, that they had part with Christ, and were joint heirs with Him. They then would want that more sure word of prophecy, that they were sealed in the heavens and had the promise of eternal life in the kingdom of God. Then, having this promise sealed unto them, it was an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast. Though the thunder might roll and lightnings flash, and earthquakes bellow, and war gather thick around, yet this hope and knowledge would support the soul in every hour of trial, trouble and tribulation. Then knowledge through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Compare this principle once with Christendom at the present day, and where are they, with all their bloated religion, piety and sacredness while at the same time they are crying out against prophets, apostles, angels, revelations, prophesying and visions, etc. Why, they are just ripening for the damnation of hell. They will be damned, for they reject **the most glorious principle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ** and treat with disdain and trample under foot the key that unlocks the heavens and puts in our possession the glories of the celestial world. Yes, I say, such will be damned, with all their professed godliness. Then I would exhort you to go on and continue to call upon God until you make your calling and election sure for yourselves, by obtaining this more sure word of prophecy, and wait patiently for the promise until you obtain it, etc. TPJS, PP. 298-99

May 17, 1843

Salvation means a man's being placed beyond the power of all his enemies.

The more sure word of prophecy means a man's knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the priesthood. It is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance. TPJS, p. 301.

The above statement, now D&C 131:5-6, is most often quoted to show the Lord's approval of formal, worldly education, which may be one level of understanding for that scripture. However, we think another even more complete understanding of the above statement is that it is impossible to be ignorant of being sealed up unto eternal life because one will have absolute knowledge of that fact either through personal revelation or from receiving the second anointing. Also, in the same way it is impossible to be ignorant of whether or not one's sins have been forgiven because one will know by personal revelation when such remission is obtained.

May 21, 1843 Excerpts from "The Prophet's Discourse from II Peter, First Chapter - Reproof of Self-Righteousness"

I do not think there have been many good men on the earth since the days of Adam; but there was one good man and his name was Jesus. Many persons think a prophet must be a great deal better than anybody else. Suppose I would condescend - yes, I will call it condescend, to be a great deal better than any of you, I would be raised up to the highest heaven; and who should I have to accompany me?

I love that man better who swears a stream as long as my arm yet deals justice to his neighbors and mercifully deals his substance to the poor, than the long, smooth-faced hypocrite.

I do not want you to think that I am very righteous, for I am not, God judges men according to the use they make of the light which He gives them.

"We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. We were eyewitnesses of his majesty and heard the voice of excellent glory." [2 Peter 1:19]

And what could be more sure? When He was transfigured on the mount, what could be more sure to them? Divines have been quarreling for ages about the meaning of this.

There are three grand secrets lying in this chapter [II Peter 1] which no man can dig out, unless by the light of revelation and which unlocks the whole chapter as the things that are written are only hints of things which existed in the prophet's mind, which are not written concerning eternal glory.

The "Most Glorious Principle"

I am going to take up this subject by virtue of the knowledge of God in me, which I have received from heaven. The opinions of men, so far as I am concerned, are to me as the crackling of thorns under the pot, or the whistling of the wind. I break the ground; I lead the way like Columbus when he was invited to a banquet where he was assigned the most honorable place at the table, and served with the ceremonials which were observed towards sovereigns. A shallow courtier present, who was meanly jealous of him, abruptly asked him whether he thought that in case he had not discovered the Indies, there were not other men in Spain who would have been capable of the enterprise? Columbus made no reply, but took an egg and invited the company to make it stand on end. They all attempted it, but in vain; whereupon he struck it upon the table so as to break one end, and left it standing on the broken part, illustrating that when he had once shown the way to the new world nothing was easier than to follow it.

Paul ascended into the third heavens and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob's ladder - the terrestrial, the celestial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter. I could explain a hundred fold more than I ever have of the glories of the kingdoms manifested to me in the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them.

The Lord deals with this people as a tender parent with a child, communicating light and intelligence and the knowledge of his ways as they can bear it. The inhabitants of the earth are asleep; they know not the day of their visitation. The Lord hath set the bow in the cloud for a sign that while it shall be seen, seed time and harvest, summer and winter shall not fail; but when it shall disappear, woe to that generation, for behold the end cometh quickly.

Contend earnestly for the like precious faith with the Apostle Peter, "and add to your faith virtue," knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity; [2 Peter 1:5-7] "for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." [2 Peter 1:8] Another point, after having all these qualifications, he lays this injunction upon the people "to make your calling and election sure." He is emphatic upon this subject - after adding all this virtue knowledge, etc., "Make your calling and election sure." [2 Peter 1:10] What is the secret - the starting point? "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." How did he obtain all things? Through the knowledge of Him who hath called him. There could not anything be given, pertaining to life and godliness, without knowledge. Woe! woe! woe to Christendom! - especially the divines and priests if this be true.

Salvation is for a man to be saved from all his enemies; for until a man can triumph over death, he is not saved. A knowledge of the priesthood alone will do this.

The design of the great God in sending us into this world, and organizing us to prepare us for the eternal worlds, I shall keep in my own bosom at present.

We have no claim in our eternal compact, in relation to eternal things, unless our actions and contracts and all things tend to this. But after all this, you have got to make your calling and election sure. If this injunction would lie largely on those to whom it was spoken, how much more those of the present generation!

1st key: Knowledge is the power of salvation. 2nd Key: Make your calling and election sure. 3rd Key: It is one thing to be on the mount and hear the excellent voice, etc., and another to hear the voice declare to you, You have a part and lot in that Kingdom. TPJS, pp. 303-306.

August 13, 1843 Excerpts from "The prophet's Remarks at the Funeral of Judge Higbee"

Four destroying angels holding power over the four quarters of the earth until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure. When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother.

The speaker continued to teach the doctrine of election and the sealing powers and principles, and spoke of the doctrine of election with the seed of Abraham, and the sealing of blessings upon his posterity, and the fathers and children, according to the declarations of the prophets.

TPJS, P. 321

August 27, 1843

...The power of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to have the power of "endless lives"; for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken.

There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here.

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1st. The King of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. Angels desire to look in to it, but they have set up too many stakes. God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses.

The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life, he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned. The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law.

What is the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood.

Salvation could not come to the world without the mediation of Jesus Christ.

How shall God come to the rescue of this generation? He will send Elijah the prophet. The law revealed to Moses in Horeb never was revealed to the children of Israel as a nation. Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers.

The anointing and sealing is to be called, elected and made sure. TPJS, pp. 322-23.

May 2, 1844 Excerpts from Joseph Smith's Address

The Savior has the words of eternal life. Nothing else can profit us. There is no salvation in believing an evil report against our neighbor. I advise all to go on to perfection, and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness. A man can do nothing for himself unless God directs him in the right way; and the Priesthood is for that purpose.

The last time I spoke on this stand it was on the resurrection of the dead, when I promised to continue my remarks upon that subject. I still feel a desire to say something on this subject. Let us this very day begin anew, and now say, with all our hearts, we will forsake our sins and be righteous.

My text is on the resurrection of the dead, which you will find in the 14th chapter of John - "In my Father's house are many mansions." It should be - "In my Father's kingdom are many kingdoms," in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint-heirs with me. ...

There are mansions for those who obey a celestial law, and there are other mansions for those who come short of the law every man in his own order.

I am going on in my progress for eternal life. It is not only necessary that you should be baptized for your dead, but you will have to go through all the ordinances for them, the same as you have gone through to save yourselves. There will be 144,000 saviors on Mount Zion, and with them an innumerable host that no man can number. Oh! I beseech you to go forward, go forward and make your calling and your election sure; and if any man preach any other Gospel than that which I have preached, he shall be cursed; and some of you who now hear me shall see it, and know that I testify the truth concerning them. TPJS, pp. 364-367

The preceding were his last words on the subject just weeks before his martyrdom. Next are several key scriptures from the Doctrine & Covenants on the subject of seeing God. The first two selections, from Section 67 & 93, speak of seeing the face of God. Seeing the face of God can be a synonym for receiving one's calling and election because that is one of the things that often happens then, but that is not always the case. We present these scriptures without highlighting or other emphasis in order to encourage careful, contemplative reading of these divinely given words that you might draw more deeply from the fountain of heaven into your understanding.

D&C 67:10-14 *10 And again, verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am - not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual.*

11 For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God.

12 Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God, neither after the carnal mind.

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13 Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected.

14 Let not your minds turn back; and when ye are worthy, in mine own due time, ye shall see and know that which was conferred upon you by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. Amen.

D&C 93:1-4 1 verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

2 And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world;

3 And that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one -

4 The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men.

The next two quotes from Sections 84 & 107 make it abundantly clear that the ultimate purpose of the Melchizedek Priesthood is to bring us into the presence of and face to face with God, an objective also portrayed so beautifully and so profoundly in the temple endowment.

D&C 84:14, 19-27

14 Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah;

...

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

23 Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God;

24 But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory.

25 Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also;

26 And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

27 Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.

We have found ourselves pondering why the Lord included in Section 84 a review of the children of Israel's ancient refusal to come up and behold the face of God. We have wondered whether there might be a parallel to the attitudes and actions of some in the Church in our day? What do you think?

D&C 107:18-19 18 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church -

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

HOW TO HAVE ONE'S CALLING AND ELECTION MADE SURE

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In the LDS church one does not seek for positions or callings. While that is a proper, even necessary practice in the church, that is certainly not the way that the Lord wants us to behave towards Him. Throughout the scriptures, in more than 50 different places and ways, time and time and time again we are told to come to Him, to ask, seek and knock. The Lord desires, appreciates and profoundly blesses those who earnestly and aggressively seek Him.

One of the earliest scriptural examples of an extremely determined, aggressive seeker was Abraham. Read again Abraham's words:

Abraham 1:2 *And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for mine, I SOUGHT FOR THE BLESSING OF THE FATHERS, AND THE RIGHT WHEREUNTO I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, DESIRING also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and DESIRING to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers.*

...

4 *I SOUGHT FOR MINE APPOINTMENT unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.*

Abraham was certainly not bashful or retiring about what he wanted and what he was willing to do to get it. In fact, in light of the greatness of the blessings he sought, how serious do you think he was about his quest? And, he was so successful in his quest that he is remembered with extraordinary honor, even reverence, as one of a handful of the most righteous and godly men that have ever lived on the earth and was rewarded accordingly.

So also are each of us to ask, seek, and knock until obtaining the twin prizes of, first, the remission of sins, and, second, the "end" objective of the personal assurance of eternal life (calling and election made sure).

While we do not know personally the individual in this story, his story has impressed us deeply. A man had been praying for some time to meet one of the three Nephites. The Spirit spoke to him and said in substance, "Why pray to meet one of them? Why not pray to meet the Savior?" So he began to pray to meet the Savior. Not long thereafter his new prayer was answered at which time his calling and election was also made sure. This man subsequently explained to my friend who told me this story that the Savior loves us so much, it's like a child who wants a new bike that costs \$150 but the child only has \$1. Simply by putting forth a sincere effort and putting up the \$1, the Savior then makes up the difference. We think it also worth noting that the Lord did not simply appear to him, HE HAD TO ASK FOR IT before the Lord appeared.

The best scriptural statement of this process of seeking for and obeying the personalized directions of the Lord is found in Chapter 32 of 2 Nephi verses 1-6, more specifically in verses 3 and 5:

1 *And now, behold, my beloved brethren, I suppose that ye ponder somewhat in your hearts concerning that which ye should do after ye have entered in by the way. But, behold, why do ye ponder these things in your hearts?*

2 *Do ye not remember that I said unto you that AFTER ye had received the Holy Ghost ye could speak with the tongue of angels? And now, how could ye speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost?*

3 **ANGELS SPEAK BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST;** *wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for, behold, **THE WORDS OF CHRIST WILL TELL YOU ALL THINGS WHAT YE SHOULD DO.***

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4 Wherefore, now after I have spoken these words, if ye cannot understand them it will be because ye ASK not, neither do ye KNOCK; wherefore, ye are not brought into the light, BUT MUST PERISH IN THE DARK.

5 For behold, AGAIN I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, **AND RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST, IT WILL SHOW UNTO YOU ALL THINGS WHAT YE SHOULD DO.**

6 BEHOLD, **THIS IS THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, and THERE WILL BE NO MORE DOCTRINE GIVEN UNTIL AFTER HE SHALL MANIFEST HIMSELF UNTO YOU in the flesh. And when he shall MANIFEST HIMSELF UNTO YOU in the flesh the things which he shall say unto you shall ye observe to do.**

A friend who has reached this higher point in her spiritual growth shared with us quite an interesting insight into the real meaning of the phrase "manifest himself unto you in the flesh" in verse 6 above. Her explanation was that the manifestation referred to is the personal manifestation of the Second Comforter, or Christ himself. We had always assumed it was referring to the Savior's appearance to the Nephites as recorded in 3 Nephi. However, as soon as we heard her explanation we knew it was true because the sum and substance of the Savior's teachings recorded in the 9th through the 27th Chapter of 3 Nephi is EXACTLY THE SAME DOCTRINE as the DOCTRINE in 2 Nephi 31:17 through 32:6; namely faith, repentance, baptism by water and then receiving a "remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost." 2 Nephi 31:17 Thus, since there is no difference in the doctrine that the Savior delivered in person to the Nephites, the phrase "manifest himself unto you in the flesh" must mean something else, and that something else is exactly what it says, **A PERSONAL, INDIVIDUAL MANIFESTATION.**

She also explained that receiving one's calling and election is not the end. It is, instead, the beginning of a much accelerated, extremely personalized, spiritual learning and development program for that is the purpose of communing with the Savior, Heavenly Father and the members of the Church of the Firstborn.

In the last year and a half we have met a few who have had their calling and election made sure. Until then, we had assumed that such a blessing was available only to those who had reached the end of their lives and had thus "endured to the end" and more particularly those who had served in the more responsible leadership positions in the Church, such as Bishop, Stake or Mission Presidents, etc We have learned that that assumption is completely wrong. In fact, most of those whom we have met are middle aged or younger and none of them has ever yet served in any such leadership positions.

ENDURE TO THE END (OBJECTIVE) OF OBTAINING ETERNAL LIFE

Now we'd like to share some scriptures that indicate that the word "end" as used in the oft used phrase "endure to the end" does not mean the end of one's life. Instead, it means "the end of the road that leads to eternal life" or "the end of one's testing and proving of being faithful at all hazards", which is in fact the actual receipt of the blessing of eternal life by having one's calling and election made sure. The first scripture is perhaps the clearest example of this meaning.

2 Nephi 33:4 *And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to believe in him, and to endure to the end which is life eternal.*

2 Nephi 31:20 *Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.*

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Jacob 6:11 O then, my beloved brethren, repent ye, and enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life.

Omni 26 And now, my beloved brethren, I would that ye should come unto Christ, who is the Holy One of Israel, and partake of his salvation, and the power of his redemption. Yea, come unto him, and offer your whole souls as an offering unto him, and continue in fasting and praying, and endure to the end; and as the Lord liveth ye shall be saved.

3 Nephi 15:9 (Christ speaking) Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.

The final scripture gives us the understanding of what it is that we should endure in doing, namely following Christ's example:

2 Nephi 31:16 And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved.

In our view, the example of the Savior to be followed is not so much that of His individual acts and teachings, but, rather, following the same principle that Christ followed. And we are told specifically that Christ did only what His Father directed Him to do.

John 5:19 ..., Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.

John 8:30 I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.

John 8:28 ... I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.

If the entire message of this book could be summarized into one statement, it would be "Seek the guidance of the Spirit and then do it."

The idea that "enduring to the end" means obtaining the end (or objective) of having one's calling and election made sure is in fact clearly shown by Joseph Smith who had his calling and election made sure perhaps as early as 1831, as recorded in D&C 132:49:

For I am the Lord thy God, and will be with thee even unto the end of the world, and through all eternity; for verily I seal upon you your exaltation, and prepare a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father.

It is also shown by those prophets who have explicitly told us that they had obtained their calling and election, some early in their ministry: Enos in Enos 1:27; Alma in Mosiah 26:20; 9 of the twelve Nephite disciples in 3 Nephi 28:1-3; Moroni in Ether 12:37; and Paul in 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Heber C. Kimball was sealed up to eternal life in 1839. On April 6th of that year he recorded the following in his journal:

My family having been gone about two months, during which time I heard nothing from them, our brethren being in prison; death and destruction following us everywhere we went; I felt very sorrowful and lonely. The following words came to mind, and the Spirit said unto me, "write" which I did by taking a piece of paper and writing on my knee as follows: "Verily I say unto my servant Heber, thou art my son, in whom I am well pleased; for thou art careful to hearken to my words, and not transgress my law, nor rebel against my servant Joseph Smith, for thou hast a respect to the words of mine anointed, even from the least to the greatest of them; therefore thy name is written in heaven, no more to be blotted out for ever." "The Life of Heber C. Kimball," Orson F. Whitney, p. 241.

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WAYS IN WHICH CALLING AND ELECTION MAY INITIALLY BE RECEIVED

From the foregoing material it appears that the ways in which one may first learn that his or her calling and election is made sure are:

1. By revelation from God, known as "the more sure word of prophecy", which can come in either of two ways:
 - A. By the spirit as in the example of the Heber C. Kimball, or
 - B. By the personal appearance of the Savior who is the Second Comforter as Joseph described.
2. By receiving the second anointing which "anointing and sealing is to be called, elected and made sure." TPJS, p. 323 (supra, p. 27-8) Joseph also said that this anointing and sealing bestowed the fulness of the priesthood. TPJS, pp. 322-23 (supra, p. 27-8)

A friend who has already walked this way gave us further insights as she explained that for her and others she knows there was a progression of events. First came the impression or message of the spirit that their calling and election was made sure. Then, as she had faith in that message and continued to seek, came the Second Comforter. She also explained the role of the second anointing as being essential, but that for one who has had either or both of the experiences described in 1., above, that person enjoys all of the blessings associated with this state even though that one has not yet received the second anointing. In other words, the actual anointing, while necessary, is more of a formality which sooner or later will be done, but there is no delay in one's enjoyment of all the blessings associated with this state.

While it is obviously advantageous to obtain one's calling and election in this life, the opportunity is not lost by death and may continue to be sought for in the spirit world. Those who enter the spirit world without that promise can be given that promise and are then called "just men made perfect." Such are those "who are not resurrected, but inherit the same [celestial] glory." D&C 129:3 & 76:69-70.

Wilford Woodruff wrote of proxy administrations of this blessing. After the usual temple work had been done in the Saint George Temple for Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, Benjamin Franklin appeared to him seeking yet further blessings. Of that meeting he wrote:

I spent several hours with him (Benjamin Franklin) and talked over our endowments. He wanted some more work done for him than had been done which I promised him he should have. ... I made up my mind to get 2d anointing for Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. "Wilford Woodruff, History of His Life and Labors", Matthias F. Cowley, Bookcraft, 1965, p. 586.

144,000 TO BRING ETERNAL LIFE TO ALL WHO WILL COME

The mission of the 144,000 is seldom spoken of in depth, primarily because not much is known about the subject. About all that we know of the 144,000 is their priesthood authority and their mission, which is clearly explained in D&C 77:11 thusly:

11 Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel - twelve thousand out of every tribe?
*A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, **TO BRING AS MANY AS WILL COME TO THE CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN.***

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In Chapter 24 at pages 24-6 & 24-7 we set forth many of the scriptures from the D&C which clearly tell us that THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST BORN ARE THOSE WHO ARE SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE. In other words, they are those who have had their calling and election made sure.

On the infrequent occasions when the subject of the 144,000 has come up in a Sunday School class, we have often heard comments to the effect that, "Well, they are missionaries to the world who will go forth to bring people into the gospel and into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." This is, of course, a half truth which leads to a gross misunderstanding.

Yes, the 144,000 are in a sense missionaries. But their mission is to bring "all who will come" to receive their callings and elections, which is the same as bringing them directly to Christ and Heavenly Father. Thus, the "missionary work" of the 144,000 is most likely to be among those who already are members of "the outer Church" or The LDS Church, but their mission is to bring "all who will come" to "the inner Church" or The Church Of The Firstborn.

One final thought. If we are anywhere near being correct on our views on how close we are to the Savior's actual return in glory (see Chapter 3 "What time Is It?"), then if the actual work of the 144,000 has not already begun such work will likely commence perhaps very soon.

Is there likely to be any public announcement that the work of the 144,000 has begun? We know of no scriptures that speak to that subject. However, our own personal view, based on the quiet way with which the Lord almost always does the more sacred things, is that it is likely to be a very low-key, quiet, neighbor-to-neighbor undertaking (as in "when you have been warned then warn your neighbor").

THE SAVIOR IS THE ONLY WAY BACK TO HEAVENLY FATHER

Receiving the Second Comforter, which is Christ Himself, is not the highest of one's privileges in this life. It is our opportunity and privilege to return all the way to our Heavenly Father, not just to the Son. From a few scriptures it seems clear to us that once you receive the Savior, the Savior then takes you to the Father. Consider carefully the meaning and the implications of the following verses:

D&C 75:74 *And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, AND SANCTIFY YOURSELVES; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, THAT I MAY MAKE YOU CLEAN.*

75 THAT I MAY TESTIFY UNTO YOUR FATHER, AND YOUR GOD, AND MY GOD, THAT YOU ARE CLEAN FROM THE BLOOD OF THIS WICKED GENERATION; that I may fulfill this promise, that great and last promise, which I have made unto you, when I will.

D&C 76:107 *When He shall deliver up the kingdom, and PRESENT IT UNTO THE FATHER, SPOTLESS, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of the Almighty God.*

D&C 110:4 *I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I AM YOUR ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER.*

D&C 93:1, 19 *Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;*

...

19 I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, THAT YOU MAY COME UNTO THE FATHER IN MY NAME, and in due time receive of HIS FULLNESS.

D&C 132:12 I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment -that no man shall come UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY ME OR BY MY WORD, which is my law, saith the Lord.

PEOPLE ARE RECEIVING THIS BLESSING TODAY

As we mentioned earlier, since January 1993 when we began distributing this book, we have met something like half a dozen people who we know have had their calling and election made sure. We have also heard of many others. Only one or two of those we know of are at the end of their lives. Most are middle aged or younger and most have yet to serve in any major leadership position, such as Bishop, etc. Most will not say a word about what they have received, but once in a while, by listening very carefully to what is said, one can put the pieces together. Those that we are certain about we have known well enough that they have been more open with us.

The real lesson is not only that this blessing is real and available, but that it is happening to people right now, today, all around us. And the number of those receiving it will only increase as events proceed ever more rapidly to the divinely decreed crescendo that seems to be so very near, even at the door. **So for those who truly and earnestly desire these blessings, there is no better time to begin the quest than right now.**

APPENDIX

My 54 Week Journey

I share this sacred account of my "born again" experience only that it may help another in his or her search to "come unto Christ." (Moroni 10)

My quest for a difference in my life began in 1981. I knew there was more spiritually than I was getting through my church meetings. I was dissatisfied with my Sunday, only learning from other people, and began an in depth search of the scriptures. I read book after book, attended lectures, education weeks, and listened to devotionals. I had a hunger and thirst that could not be satisfied. I look back now and realize the yearnings I had were to lead me to the "mighty change." I was so inexperienced in spiritual things I kept thinking my yearnings would be satisfied by books and other people's ideas, rather than going to my Heavenly Father in prayer, and using the scriptures more.

The more I studied and learned with my head, deep in my heart I knew I knew nothing, especially about my Savior. There was more to the scriptures than stories and nice quotes, but they were sealed to me and they weren't the sealed portion!!! They were sealed because my eyes were blind and my ears were dull of hearing.

In 1986 President Benson gave a talk about the Church being under condemnation. I was part of that and it made me feel very uncomfortable. I didn't like being under condemnation from the Lord. This was the Lord's servant and mouthpiece and I took very literally what He said. I wanted that lifted off me, not just me but my family, friends, and everyone. My study intensified. Some days I studied more than others. We had several children during this time so my days were hectic, but I spent time daily in study and prayer.

In the fall of 1992, after unending locked doors in my spiritual searching, feeling like I almost had it, but because I lacked pieces so I had nothing, I heard a talk that held the key. I learned about the children of Israel and how they, like us, were under condemnation. I learned what they lacked was the willingness to let the Savior's gift work for them, they wanted to do it themselves (That explains the 600 plus commandments). The Savior's gift-The Atonement-How did that apply in my life? Where did I fit in all of this? I knew a lot about the gift in my head, but my heart did not understand.

I had some traumatic family events shortly after this that stripped me naked spiritually. There was nothing there. I felt like a stained glass window that had been pushed out of its frame and lay on the floor in hundreds of pieces. I had been studying for 12 years. I had much head learning, but my heart had barely been used. The mourning all but stopped my progress. I was numbed emotionally. I was in a survival mode. I had no extended family support, my friends all left, I was alone. What I knew in my head really didn't matter much. I learned how "nothing" we are without our Heavenly Father and His Son, our Redeemer. I knew what King Benjamin's message to his people about out "nothingness." (Mosiah 2)

In December of '93 I read a talk about prayer and overcoming false beliefs. I realized I didn't know how to pray. I had a lot of false beliefs caused by "traditions of the fathers and disobedience." (D&C 93:39)

For Christmas I received a copy of the book "Experiencing The Mighty Change." I read this book. So many bits and pieces I had studied were all put together under one cover. This book literally saved me 20 more years of study. As I read this book, I realized this was what the Spirit, the study, and all the experiences were driving me towards. I didn't know what "born again" was. As I read the Book of Mormon, I discovered it was all through that holy book. No wonder President Benson was pushing us to read that book. No wonder we were under condemnation. The scriptures began to open.

On December 2, I began my journey-the day I heard the prayer talk. I began to pray about my false beliefs, the Savior, my condemnation. Three weeks later, when I received the "Mighty Change" book, I began to pray about born again also. I also began to fast. I didn't know until I read Mighty Change that I didn't know how to fast either.

This journey was a very lonely one. At the time I knew of no one who had had the born again experience except an author of one of the books I read. I called him several times (long distance so the calls were brief) to make sure I was on track, to see if the feelings I was experiencing were normal and other things. He was so kind to me. I could feel his goodness over the phone line. He strengthened me and I will be forever grateful to him for his help. I struggled so much because the path hadn't been cleared and very few people were willing to speak to me about the subject. Now I know it was because of ignorance. We all have our own experience so it is a new path for each one. But I also feel to be strengthened by another is a great help during this most crucial and vulnerable time.

I decided I would fast every week. This was a challenge to me because I had blood sugar problems. I had to do it gradually but I now can fast a full 24 hours. Not only did I receive spiritual miracles, but physical miracles. What a blessing to have been healed from the blood sugar disorder I have been plagued with for years. What a wonderful blessing to participate in a true fast. It is a powerful testimony to me of the promises in Isaiah 58. Most important of all, the heavens were being opened to me.

I started getting up before my family every morning and start having "mighty prayer." I used to think a mighty prayer was five minutes. What a privilege it is to talk to our Father at the beginning of every day and feel of His love for me revelation about original experiences which set them in place and tutored from on high and healed. (Talk about counseling!!!) I was made aware of my sins which were caused from these false beliefs (these come from disobedience or traditions of our fathers-D&C 93). I was made aware of all my sins. . .all of them. I knew of the hurt I had caused others and the impediment upon my own growth. I saw myself as Christ can see us, all the cover-ups, the sneakiness, the honors of men syndrome, my condemnation of others, all my self righteousness and everything that was my carnal man.

It was necessary for me to get some unlayering done. These were layers that were blocking the Spirit from being in full fellowship with me. It took a while for me to get

through this process. I know now it was because I was mourning the deaths of three close loved ones and my heart had to go through the process slowly. I would feel the Spirit, the cleansing and all that comes with this for 1 -2 hours a day, 3-4 days a week. My husband, on the other hand, went through it in a few days with no let up.

I felt mourning for my errors and sins. This part of the experience was not very fun. I was mourning because of the distance they had put between me and my God. The mourning was physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. It was literal gut wrenching mourning and sorrow.

One day, as I was studying about the Savior, I saw Him in Gethsemane. This was my Lord struggling over the sins of the world. Struggling over my sins. I saw Him see me. I saw Him see my life. He saw all my filth and unworthiness and said, "Yes!!! I will do it!!! I love her!!!" He bought me with His blood. He did this for each person. As I watched Him I thought my heart would break. I felt as though my chest would explode. I sobbed as I felt His love and compassion for me. I felt His holiness, His goodness, His strength, His truth, His mercy. These words seem hollow to use to describe Him. I couldn't bear to watch Him anymore. "Dear God" I cried, "Please, I cannot see this anymore." I saw Him in agony a while longer, then the vision closed. I lay on the floor exhausted from what I had just witnessed.

My new life began with a wash of peace that filled and warmed my entire being. It was a feeling of burning throughout my whole body-but a sweet burning. The voice of the Lord came to me and said, "Your sins are forgiven." I didn't want to move. I could feel the warmth, the love, the joy, the total peace. I had the same experience the next morning and again on Sunday during the sacrament. December 16, exactly 54 weeks from the beginning of the journey. I turned it all over to the Lord. All of it I gave Him and He made me His. I knew my life was acceptable to Him. I was a new creature. I was gratefully His.

All the rest of my false beliefs He took. He took my sins. He took the condemnation I felt for myself and thus for others. He took all judgement from my heart, all the have to be's and need to be's and ought to be's. I remember these things and the accompanying state of being only when He brings it to my recollection. The guilt and torment, the heaviness and burden has been washed away.

I live for today. This moment of time and all is perfect in Him. I know the instant I do something offensive and take care of it or do not do or say it. The Spirit does a wonderful job tutoring. I have been blessed with the gift of joy, gratitude, compassion, and love. I have been blessed with discernment, to see into the hearts of people I interact with and know their motives, whether righteous or evil. The scriptures are being opened to me.

I am at the beginning of my walk with God (2 Nephi 9:41). I sing praises to Him. Without Him I am nothing, with Him I can do all He wants me to do. He is God. He is truth. He is no respecter of persons. He is merciful. This is a gift for all, to be bestowed on all. In order to know the attributes of God and have them burned into your heart, you must

receive this gift. In The Lectures on Faith, Joseph Smith teaches about the attributes of God perfectly. This born again process teaches you these things about Him.

The world is a different place. I see it through new eyes and with the gift of a new heart. Everything is perfect. We all experience what we need to bring us to Christ if we allow it to happen. God is merciful!!! He pardoned me!!! a sinner, and truly I, as the weakest of all His disciples, He makes me strong.

I pray that the love, light, and joy of the savior may be with you. If you haven't had this experience, it is worth the journey. For me I had to go to Hell and back and it is worth it!!!!

I pray whoever may read this account may feel His Spirit upon you even as the warmth of the sunshine. I know God is our Father. I know by experience of this and also of our Savior Jesus Christ.

He Loves us!!! He died for us!!! He lives for us!!!!

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

The following experience is not that of any of the authors of this work. We obtained this copy of this person's experience just as we were completing our manuscript. We think you will find it very interesting and instructive.

A Personal Testimony of Jesus Christ and the Reality and Power of His Atonement in My Life

In June, 1974 I was baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was a glorious experience and I remember it well.

I never questioned the truthfulness of the gospel or of the Restoration. From the moment I heard the missionaries teach, I knew it was true. There was never even a flicker of doubt. It was like being reunited with an old and dear friend.

The spirit of repentance did not come upon me until the day I was baptized. Before that time I had received a testimony that the Gospel was true and that the Church of Jesus Christ had in fact been restored by the Prophet Joseph Smith. But the question of my sins had not been the object of my serious consideration until the day of my baptism. I was at the time, twenty-four years of age.

For me, the process of repentance began with my baptismal interview prior to my baptism. The interviewer was kind and considerate although his questions pierced my soul. I wept as I confessed my sins and admitted of my deep sorrow for my past life. My spirit was truly contrite as I entered into the waters of baptism. I wept openly throughout my baptism and confirmation as the spirit of the Lord testified to my heart of the tender mercies of a loving God. I had truly been born again to see the Kingdom of Heaven. I felt the burden of my sins lifted and I rejoiced with all my heart at my membership in Christ's true church.

Through it all I did not know that, although I had received the spirit of repentance prior to my baptism, I had not received the gift of full repentance; that, while I had been born again to "see" the Kingdom of heaven through the receipt of my testimony by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet I had not been born again to "enter" into the Kingdom of God and I had not actually received the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. While I had enjoyed a sanctifying experience that lifted the burden of my sins, yet I had not been sanctified unto a complete and unconditional remission of all my sins, including the effects of those sins. My knowledge of these heavenly truths did not come until later, in July of 1981.

For seven years, from 1974 until 1981 I was actively and zealously engaged in Gospel living. In December, 1975 my precious wife and I were married in the Arizona Temple. I was consumed with the desire to live the Gospel fully; to serve, teach, testify, study and pray fervently. And I did so continually. I was actively involved in missionary work,

temple work and home teaching. I strived to magnify all my church callings and took my membership in Christ's church very seriously, as I do to this day. I absorbed myself in Gospel and scripture study feeling that I couldn't read enough. I indeed hungered and thirsted after righteousness and truth and this hunger and passion has not subsided for even a moment, for even a heartbeat.

Through it all I enjoyed many spiritual experiences, sanctifying experiences. I have come now to describe such experiences as "contractions" leading to my spiritual birth. I felt the spirit of the Lord with me many times; I felt His love for me and felt a great love for Him and a desire to know Him. I was privileged to be an instrument in the Lord's hands several times in exercising the Priesthood. Miracles were performed and lives were blessed. It was a wonderful seven years; a time of growth, development and preparation; a time of gestation. Yet through it all I sensed that something was missing.

I could not describe what was missing in my life then, although now it is clear and understandable. Still, describing it to others is very difficult. It's like trying to explain the joy of parenthood to those who have never been parents.

In 1981 my life changed. For seven years the Lord had prepared my mind and my heart. My time was at hand. My Heavenly Father sent to me a son of God, a member of the church who was and is a true disciple of Christ, to draw me unto His Beloved Son. This blessed man carried within his soul the seed of Christ which he planted within my heart. Like all true endowments of the Spirit, only those who have the gift can confer it to others by the power of the Holy Ghost.

What was this seed of Christ? It was the blessed gift of pure testimony that enlivened within my soul the need and will to live spiritually. This is the endowment that ultimately induced the labor of the second birth.

The Spirit of the Lord bore witness to me that this man knew Christ. As we sat in my home one evening I felt the power of his testimony of the Savior as I had never felt it before. My soul was aflame with the desire to know the Lord as this man did, and I told him so.

The next morning as we were about to depart, my new friend boldly invited me to come to Christ. He urged me to pray more fervently until I received the baptism by fire; he called me to repent until I received a complete remission of my sins. His words were bold but kind and they sunk deeply unto the core of my heart. The seed of Christ had been planted. Little did I know what all of this would mean. This was a very difficult time in my life. At the time I was serving as the Stake Mission President in my stake. I was immersed in my calling and was enjoying a good measure of success. But I was self-employed at the time and my consulting practice was very slow. In fact, at the time I had no clients and was financially without means to provide for my family.

It was during this time that I was called to come home to Christ. Shortly after my friend departed I found myself in my office alone and without work. The Spirit called me one day as I sat behind my desk and prompted me to pray. I instructed my secretary that I

did not want to be interrupted under any circumstances and then locked myself in my office and began to pour out my heart unto God.

I prayed that day and for two succeeding days. I prayed long and hard and for many things. But the primary intent and focus of my prayers was to know the Lord and to understand and appreciate the personal implications of the Atonement in my life.

On the third day, July 21, 1981, I found myself kneeling again by my chair in fervent prayer to know the Lord. Suddenly I saw myself praying and the presence of the Lord was beside me. As I watched, the Lord spoke to my mind and said, "Look." I looked and for the first time in my life I saw myself as I really was, through the eyes of Christ.

What I saw I cannot fully describe in words. My whole soul was illuminated and I saw with complete clarity and understanding the deepest recesses of my subconscious mind. I saw within the hidden nooks and crannies of my soul the effects of all my sins as well as all my sins of commission and omission which had been repressed into the hidden regions of my mind. I was completely transparent. Everything was now so painfully clear, my sinful motives, intentions and desires, all cleverly disguised and rationalized through years of self-talk. Even the good things I had done for the wrong reasons were flashed before my all-seeing eye. No act, word or deed escaped my view. I saw everything.

As I beheld myself thus, my mind was, to use Alma's words, "racked with torment" and "inexpressible horror." Several times I tried to shut out the vision but the Lord would not allow it. Each time I tried to turn away the Lord would say, "Look," and I continued to look into my soul. I wept and pleaded for the Lord to stop the vision. When I had finally seen everything the vision ended and there was darkness. I turned to find the Lord but He was no longer beside me.

The scene instantly changed and I found myself behind the brush on the outside of a garden clearing. Again a voice came to my mind and instructed me to look. My eyes turned to the garden clearing and there, in the midst, I saw my beloved Redeemer. Suddenly it became clear to me that I was witnessing His act of Atonement. But what transpired I was not prepared to see.

How can one explain with mortal words the agony of a God. Anything I say or write somehow diminishes the impact.

Be that as it may, I saw the love and suffering of the Christ and am a personal witness of it. I don't know how it is possible, but I was in Gethsemane on the day of His Agony and I saw in great and terrible detail with my eyes and heard in awful clarity with my ears that which is too sacred to describe to unprepared ears.

His sobs and His cries pierced my soul and I felt the wrenching of my heart with each audible groan or quivering convulsion of His body. Then came the revelation that broke my heart: "Behold the love of God for you and His suffering for your sins."

It was too much to bear. As I became aware that He was suffering such agony for because of my.. sins, because of His love for a "soul so rebellious and proud as mine", my heart broke and I thought I would die. Never had I sobbed and wept so violently and with such bitterness of soul. I never knew the body could sob as mine did. I never knew a heart could break as mine did. I never knew a broken heart would hurt as much as I hurt. I was in agony as never before. I thought my heart would stop and my head and chest would explode. I cried out and begged the Father to stop the suffering of my Friend and Elder Brother. "Stop it! Stop it! Please stop His suffering!" I wept, I sobbed and my body convulsed in anguish as I attempted to reach through the brush to hold Him, to somehow comfort Him. But His suffering did not stop and there was nothing I could do to help Him.

Finally, resolving myself to this hopeless state and wishing only to die for what I had done to Him, I cried out through my choking sobs, "Please forgive me! Please, dear God, forgive me for what I have done to my Savior. I am sorry, so very, very sorry for hurting Him so. It is enough," I continued, "please stop His suffering. I will never again do anything to hurt Him. Never! Never!"

I continued to sob and plead for forgiveness until I was totally exhausted and lay slumped on the floor weeping hot tears of anguish and pain. My strength was exhausted and I was prepared to die when the vision stopped and the voice of the Lord said unto me, "My son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

When I heard these words from my Savior I was filled with fire, which I later came to know was the endowment of charity. Never had I felt such love, such peace. I was overcome again unto great sobbing, but this time with joy.

So intense was the outpouring of God's love through the fire of His Spirit that I felt as though my very life would end and my flesh would be consumed. I came to know by the spirit of revelation that my life was acceptable to the Lord; that I had been completely and unconditionally cleansed of all my sins and the effects of my sins; that I had been made holy, without spot -- clean every whit -- by His precious blood. I had been truly born again to enter into the Kingdom of God; I was redeemed from the fall; sanctified by the endowment of His perfect love, even charity. Through this experience I came to understand the meaning of total conversion; of justification and of sanctification; of full repentance.

I now know with a perfect knowledge that all men must be born again, or sanctified of the spirit, in order to receive their salvation and obtain their exaltation. I know now that only those who are truly born again can enjoy the blessings of the sanctified and can develop to the full stature of Christ. I know now that there is a difference between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man; between full repentance and partial repentance; between a broken heart and a contrite spirit; between receiving forgiveness from one's sins and a complete and unconditional forgiveness from the effects of the fall or the natural man; between an awakening of conscience which cultivates a sense of duty to God and man and a mighty change of heart which bears the fruit of charity toward God and all men.

I know now that the only way to Christ is through the offering of a broken heart and that the only way to offer such a sacrifice acceptably is to experience, in a personal way, the power and reality of the Atonement in our life; to understand and appreciate sufficiently the personal implications of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins and fallen nature. Perhaps this may come in different ways to different people, but the substance and results of the experience will, of necessity, always be the same. The greatest manifestation of God's love for us is in the Savior's suffering for our personal sins. It is the power of His suffering for us that draws us to Him in a complete sense and changes our heart totally. When our sacrifice of a broken heart has been accepted (i.e., justified) by the Lord, when we have fully repented of all our sins, then is our life acceptable (i.e., justified) unto the Lord. Sanctification, which is the effect or fruit of justification, totally cleanses and purifies the spirit and endows the person with a faith and hope in Christ, and with charity.

For the third printing we have added to this Appendix the following accounts from church history of the baptisms of fire of Heber C. Kimball, Lorenzo Snow and some others. While the accounts of their experiences as they have come down to us are nowhere near as detailed or as dramatic as the "Personal Testimony" they are certainly precious and edifying concerning this tremendous blessing that the Lord has for those who seek it.

The following is from "The Life Of Heber C. Kimball" by Orson F. Whitney, Bookcraft, 1943. Heber C. Kimball was baptized on April 16, 1832 in or near Mendon, New York joining a congregation in that area of approximately thirty souls that included John and Mary Young, Sen.; Brigham and Miriam Young; Phineas H. and Clarissa Young; Joseph Young; Lorenzo D. and Persis Young; and Fanny Young.

Heber C. Kimball described his baptism of fire in the following words:

"Under the ordinances of baptism and the laying on of hands, I received the Holy Ghost, as the disciples did in ancient days, which was like a consuming fire. I felt as though I sat at the feet of Jesus, and was clothed in my right mind, although the people called me crazy.

I continued in this way for many months, and it seemed as though my body would consume away; at the same time the scriptures were unfolded to my mind in such a wonderful manner that it appeared to me, at times, as if I had formerly been familiar with them." "The Life Of Heber C. Kimball", pp. 22—3.

After recounting Heber C. Kimball's experience, Orson F. Whitney then wrote the following:

"The branch in Mendon began to flourish, and the gifts of the spirit were poured out upon its members. This branch is reputed to have been the second in the Church to receive the gift of tongues. One of the branches in Pennsylvania was the first in which that gift was manifested.

Such a pentecostal renewal could scarcely take place without a corresponding movement of opposition on the part of the powers of darkness. The inevitable was at hand. Satan commenced to rage, and the Saints were annoyed and persecuted. Heber's former friends turned against him. His creditors combined to push him to the wall. During one week five or six executions were taken out against him. His brother Solomon was the only one outside the Church, willing to lend him a helping hand in his financial troubles, resulting from the inimical actions of his neighbors and old—time associates. His brother Charles, who had formerly befriended him, was dead. But the Lord opened his way, much to the chagrin of his persecutors, and he obtained money to meet his liabilities, so that none of his property was sold at auction." Ibid, pg. 23.

Others also enjoyed similar spiritual blessings. Some time after being baptized and ordained an Elder by Joseph Young, Heber began laboring in the ministry as a missionary with both Joseph and Brigham Young. They labored with others in Avon, Genesee, and Lyonstown with significant success. Heber recounted the spiritual blessings that some of the new converts enjoyed on one occasion, thusly:

"Brother Ezra Landon preached in Avon and Genesee, baptized eighteen or twenty, and being afraid to confirm them and promise the Holy Ghost, he requested me to confirm them, which I did according to the best of my knowledge, pronouncing but a

few words on the head of each one, and invariably saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost in the name of Jesus Christ.' Immediately the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and several commenced speaking in tongues before they arose from their knees, and we had a joyful time. Some ten or twelve spoke in tongues, neither of whom had ever heard any person speak in tongues before, they being the first baptized in that place." Ibid, pg. 24

The following account by Lorenzo Snow of his baptism of fire was taken from "The Presidents Of The Church" by Preston Nibley, Deseret Book, 1945.

"I was baptized by Elder John Boynton, then one of the Twelve Apostles, June, 1836, at Kirtland, Ohio. Previous to accepting the ordinance of baptism, in my investigations of the principles taught by the Latter—day Saints, which I proved by comparison to be the same as those mentioned in the New Testament taught by Christ and His Apostles, I was thoroughly convinced that obedience to those principles would impart miraculous powers, manifestations and revelations. With sanguine expectation of this result, I received baptism and the ordinance of laying on of hands by one who professed to have divine authority; and having thus yielded obedience to these ordinances, I was in constant expectation of the fulfillment of the promise of the reception of the Holy Ghost. The manifestation did not immediately follow my baptism as I had expected, but although the time was deferred, when I did receive it, its realization was more perfect, tangible and miraculous than even my strongest hopes had led me to anticipate.

Some two or three weeks after I was baptized, one day while engaged in my studies, I began to reflect upon the fact that I had not obtained a knowledge of the truth of the work - that I had not realized the fulfillment of the promise, 'he that doeth my will shall know of the doctrine,' and I began to feel very uneasy. I laid aside my books, left the house and wandered around through the fields under the oppressive influence of a gloomy, disconsolate spirit, while an indescribable cloud of darkness seemed to envelope me. I had been accustomed, at the close of day, to retire for secret prayer, to a grove a short distance from my lodgings, but at this time I felt no inclination to do so. The spirit of prayer had departed and the heavens seemed like brass over my head. At length, realizing that the usual time had come for secret prayer, I concluded I would not forego my evening service, and, as a matter of formality, knelt as I was in the habit of doing, and in my accustomed, retired place, but not feeling as I was wont to feel.

I had no sooner opened my lips in an effort to pray, than I heard a sound, just above my head, like the rustling of silken robes; and immediately the spirit of God descended upon me; completely enveloping my whole person, filling me from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet, and O the joy and happiness I felt! No language can describe the almost instantaneous transition from a dense cloud of mental and spiritual darkness into a refulgence of light and knowledge, that God lives, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and of the restoration of the Holy Priesthood, and the fulness of the Gospel. It was a complete baptism - a tangible immersion in the heavenly principle or element, the Holy Ghost; and even more real and physical in its effects upon every part of my system than the immersion by water; dispelling forever, so long as reason and memory last, all possibility of doubt or fear in relation to the fact handed down to us historically that the "babe of Bethlehem" is truly the son of God; also the fact that He is now being revealed to the children of men, and communicating knowledge, the same as in Apostolic times. I was perfectly satisfied, as well I might be, for my expectations were more than realized; I think I may safely say, in an infinite degree.

I cannot tell how long I remained in the full flow of the blissful enjoyment and divine enlightenment, but it was several minutes before the celestial element which filled and surrounded me began gradually to withdraw. On arising from my kneeling posture,

with my heart swelling with gratitude to God, beyond the power of expression, I felt - I knew that He had conferred on me what only an omnipotent being can confer - that which is of greater value than all the wealth and honors worlds can bestow. That night as I retired to rest, the same wonderful manifestations were repeated, and continued to be for several successive nights. The sweet remembrance of those glorious experiences, from that time to the present, brings them fresh before me, imparting an inspiring influence which pervades my whole being, and I trust will to the close of my earthly existence." "The Presidents Of The Church", pp. 173—176.

"TRY THE SPIRITS"

from the "Times and Seasons" by the Prophet Joseph Smith, April 1, 1842
Documentary History of the Church Vol 4:571-581; TPJS pp 202-215

Recent occurrences that have transpired amongst us render it an imperative duty devolving upon me to say something in relation to the spirits by which men are actuated.

It is evident from the Apostles' writings, that many false spirits existed in their day, and had "gone forth into the world," and that it needed intelligence which God alone could impart to detect false spirits, and to prove what spirits were of God. The world in general have been grossly ignorant in regard to this one thing, and why should they be otherwise - for "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

The Egyptians were not able to discover the difference between the miracles of Moses and those of the magicians until they came to be tested together; and if Moses had not appeared in their midst, they would unquestionably have thought that the miracles of the magicians were performed through the mighty power of God, for they were great miracles that were performed by them-a supernatural agency was developed, and great power manifested.

It would have been equally as difficult for us to tell by what spirit the Apostles prophesied, or by what power the Apostles spoke and worked miracles. Who could have told whether the power of Simon, the sorcerer, was of God or of the devil?

There always did, in every age, seem to be a lack of intelligence pertaining to this subject. Spirits of all kinds have been manifested, in every age, and almost among all people.

If we go among the pagans, they have their spirits; the Mohammedans, the Jews, the Christians, the Indians-all have their spirits, all have a supernatural agency, and all contend that their spirits are of God. Who shall solve the mystery "Try the spirits," says John, but who is to do it? The learned, the eloquent, the philosopher, the sage, the divine-all am ignorant. The heathens will boast of their gods, and of the great things that have been unfolded by their oracles. The Mussulman will boast of his Koran, and of the divine communications that his progenitors have received. The Jews have had numerous instances, both ancient and modern, among them of men who have professed to be inspired, and sent to bring about great events, and the Christian world has not been slow in making up the number.

Ignorance of the Nature of Spirits

"Try the spirits," but what by? Are we to try them by the creeds of men? What preposterous folly-what sheer ignorance-what madness! Try the motions and actions of an eternal being (for I contend that all spirits are such) by a thing that was conceived in ignorance, and brought forth in folly-a cobweb of yesterday! Angels would hide their faces, and devils would be ashamed and insulted, and would say, "Paul we know, and Jesus we know, but who are ye?" Let each man of society make a creed and try evil spirits by it, and the devil would shake his sides; it is all that he would ask-all that he would desire. Yet many of them do this, and hence "many spirits are abroad in the world."

One great evil is, that men are ignorant of the nature of spirits; their power, laws, government, intelligence, etc., and imagine that when there is anything like power, revelation, or vision manifested, that it must be of God. **Hence the Methodists, Presbyterians, and others frequently possess a spirit that will cause them to lie down, and during its operation, animation is frequently entirely suspended; they consider it to be the power of God, and a glorious manifestation from God-a manifestation of what?** Is there any intelligence communicated? Are the curtains of heaven withdrawn, or the purposes of God developed? Have they seen and conversed with an angel-or have the glories of futurity burst upon their view? No! but their body has been inanimate, the operation of their spirit suspended, and all the intelligence that can be obtained from them when they arise, is a shout of "glory," or "hallelujah," or some incoherent expression; but they have had "the power."

The Shaker will whirl around on his heel, impelled by a supernatural agency or spirit, and think that he is governed by the Spirit of God; and the Jumper will jump and enter into all kinds of extravagances. A Primitive Methodist will shout under the influence of that spirit, until he will rend the heavens with his cries; while the Quakers (or Friends) moved as they think, by the Spirit of God, will sit still and say nothing. Is God the author of all this? If not all of it, which does

He recognize? Surely, such a heterogeneous mass of confusion never can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Discerning of Spirits by Power of Priesthood

Every one of these professes to be competent to try his neighbor's spirit, but no one can try his own, and what is the reason? Because they have not a key to unlock, no rule wherewith to measure, and no criterion whereby they can test it. Could any one tell the length, breadth or height of a building without a rule? Test the quality of metals without a criterion, or point out the movements of the planetary systems, without a knowledge of astronomy? Certainly not; and if such ignorance as this is manifested about a spirit of this kind, who can describe an angel of light? If Satan should appear as one in glory, who can tell his color, his signs, his appearance, his glory, or what is the manner of his manifestation? Who can detect the spirit of the French prophets with their revelations and their visions, and power of manifestations? Or who can point out the spirit of the Irvingites, with their apostles and prophets, and visions and tongues, and interpretations, etc. Or who can drag into daylight and develop the hidden mysteries of the false spirits that so frequently are made manifest among the Latter-day Saints? We answer that no man can do this without the Priesthood, and having a knowledge of the laws by which spirits are governed; for as no man knows the things of God, but by the Spirit of God, so no man knows the spirit of the devil, and his power and influence, but by possessing intelligence which is more than human, and having unfolded through the medium of the Priesthood the mysteries operations of his devices; without knowing the angelic form, the sanctified look and gesture, and the zeal that is frequently manifested by him for the glory of God, together with the prophetic spirit, the gracious influence, the godly appearance, and the holy garb, which are so characteristic of his proceedings and his mysterious windings.

A man must have the discerning of spirits before he can drag into daylight this hellish influence and unfold it unto the world in all its soul-destroying, diabolical, and horrid colors; for nothing is a greater injury to the children of men than to be under the influence of a false spirit when they think they have the Spirit of God. Thousands have felt the influence of its terrible power and baneful effects. Long pilgrimages have been undertaken, penances endured, and pain, misery and ruin have followed in their train; nations have been convulsed, kingdoms overthrown, provinces laid waste, and blood carnage and desolation are habiliments in which it has been clothed.

The Spirit of God the Spirit of Knowledge

As we have noticed before, the great difficulty lies in the ignorance of the nature of spirits, of the laws by which they are governed, and the signs by which they may be known; if it requires the Spirit of God to know the things of God; and the spirit of the devil can only be unmasked through that medium, then it follows as a natural consequence that unless some person or persons have a communication, or revelation from God, unfolding to them the operation of the spirit, they must eternally remain ignorant of these principles; for I contend that if one man cannot understand these things but by the Spirit of God, ten thousand men cannot; it is alike out of the reach of the wisdom of the learned, the tongue of the eloquent, the power of the mighty. And we shall at last have to come to this conclusion, whatever we may think of revelation, that without it we can neither know nor understand anything of God, or the devil; and however unwilling the world may be to acknowledge this principle, it is evident from the multifarious creeds and notions concerning this matter that they understand nothing of this principle, and it is equally as plain that without a divine communication they must remain in ignorance. The world always mistook false prophets for true ones, and those that were sent of God, they considered to be false prophets and hence they killed, stoned, punished and imprisoned the true prophets, and these had to hide themselves "in deserts and dens, and caves of the earth," and though the most honorable men of the earth, they banished them from their society as vagabonds, whilst they cherished, honored and supported knaves, vagabonds, hypocrites, impostors, and the basest of men.

The Gift of Discernment of Spirits

A man must have the discerning of spirits, as we before stated, to understand these things, and how is he to Obtain this gift if there are no gifts of the Spirit? And how can these gifts be obtained without revelation? "Christ ascended into heaven, and gave gifts to men; and

he gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers." And how were Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers and Evangelists chosen? By prophecy (revelation) and by laying on of hands-by a divine communication, and a divinely appointed ordinance-through the medium of the Priesthood, organized according to the order of God, by divine appointment. The Apostles in ancient times held the keys of this Priesthood-of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, and consequently were enabled to unlock and unravel all things pertaining to the government of the Church, the welfare of society, the future destiny of men, and the agency, power and influence of spirits; for they could control them at pleasure, bid them depart in the name of Jesus, and detect their mischievous and mysterious operations when trying to palm themselves upon the Church in a religious garb, and militate against the interest of the Church and spread truth. We read that they "cast out devils in the name of Jesus," and when a woman possessing the spirit of divination, cried before Paul and Silas, "these are the servants of the Most High God that show unto us the way of salvation," they detected the spirit. And although she spake favorably of them, Paul commanded the spirit come out of her, and saved themselves from the opprobrium that might have been heaped upon their heads, through an alliance with her, in the development of her wicked principles, which they certainly would have been charged with, if they had not rebuked the evil spirit.

The Gift Held by the Prophets

A power similar to this existed through the medium of the Priesthood in different ages. Moses could detect the magician's power, and show that he [himself] was God's servant-he knew when he was upon the mountain (through revelation) that Israel was engaged in idolatry; he could develop the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, detect witches and wizards in their proceedings, and point out the true prophets of the Lord. Joshua knew how to detect the man who had stolen the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment. Michaiah could point out the false spirit by which the four hundred prophets were governed; and if his advice had been taken, many lives would have been spared, (2 Chronicles 18) Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and many other prophets possessed this power. Our Savior, the Apostles, and even the members of the Church were endowed with this gift, for, says Paul, (1 Corinthians 12), "To one is given the gift of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discerning of spirits." All these proceeded from the same Spirit of God, and were the gifts of God. The Ephesian church were enabled by this principle, "to try those that said they were apostles, and were not, and found them liars." (Revelation 2:2.)

Difference Between Body and Spirit

In tracing the thing to the foundation, and looking at it philosophically, we shall find a very material difference between the body and the spirit; the body is supposed to be organized matter, and the spirit, by many, is thought to be immaterial, without substance. With this latter statement we should beg leave to differ, and state the spirit is a substance; that it is material, but that it is more pure, elastic and refined matter than the body; that it existed before the body, can exist in the body; and will exist separate from the body, when the body will be mouldering in the dust; and will in the resurrection be again united with it.

Spirits Eternal

Without attempting to describe this mysterious connection, and the laws that govern the body and the spirit of man, their relationship to each other, and the design of God in relation to the human body and spirit, I would just remark, that the spirits of men are eternal, that they are governed by the same Priesthood that Abraham, Melchizedek, and the Apostles were: that they are organized according to that Priesthood which is everlasting, "without beginning of days or end of years,"-that they all move in their respective spheres, and are governed by the law of God; that when they appear upon the earth they are in a probationary state, and are preparing, if righteous, for a future and greater glory; that the spirits of good men cannot interfere with the wicked beyond their prescribed bounds, for Michael, the Archangel, dared not bring a railing accusation against the devil, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan."

Wicked Spirits Restricted in Power

It would seem also, that wicked spirits have their bounds, limits, and laws by which they are governed or controlled and know their future destiny; hence, those that were in the maniac said to our Savior, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" and when Satan presented himself before the Lord, among the sons of God, he said that he came "from going to and fro in the earth, and from wandering up and down in it;" and he is emphatically called the prince of the power of the air; and, it is very evident that they possess a power that none but those who have the Priesthood can control, as we have before adverted to, in the case of the sons of Sceva.

Having said so much upon the general principles, without referring to the peculiar situation, power, and influence of the magicians of Egypt, the wizards and witches of the Jews, the oracles of the heathen, their necromancers, soothsayers, and astrologers, the maniacs or those possessed of devils in the Apostles' days, we will notice, and try to detect (so far as we have the Scriptures for our aid) some few instances of the development of false spirits in more modern times, and in this our day.

False Prophets

The "French Prophets" were possessed of a spirit that deceived; they existed in Vivaris and Dauphany, in great numbers in the year 1688; there were many boys and girls from seven to twenty-five; they had strange fits, as in tremblings and faintings, which made them stretch out their legs and arms, as in a swoon; they remained awhile in trances, and coming out of them, uttered all that came in their mouths. [see Buck's Theological Dictionary]

Now God never had any prophets that acted in this way; **there was nothing indecorous in the proceeding of the Lord's prophets in any age**; neither had the apostles nor prophets in the apostles' day anything of this kind. Paul says, "Ye may all prophesy, one by one; and if anything be revealed to another let the first hold his peace, for the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets;" but here we find that the prophets are subject to the spirit, and falling down, have twitchings, tumblings, and faintings through the influence of that spirit, being entirely under its control. Paul says, "Let everything be done decently and in order," but here we find the greatest disorder and indecency in the conduct of both men and women, as above described. The same rule would apply to the fallings, twitchings, swoonings, shaking, and trances of many of our modern revivalists.

Johanna Southcott professed to be a prophetess, and wrote a book of prophecies in 1804, she became the founder of a people that are still extant. She was to bring forth, in a place appointed, a son, that was to be the Messiah, which thing has failed. Independent of this, however, where do we read of a woman that was the founder of a church, in the word of God? Paul told the women in his day, "To keep silence in the church, and that if they wished to know anything to ask their husbands at home;" he would not suffer a woman "to rule, or to usurp authority in the church;" but here we find a woman the founder of a church, the revelator and guide, the Alpha and Omega, contrary to all acknowledged rule, principle, and order.

Jemimah Wilkinson was another prophetess that figured largely in America, in the last century. She stated that she was taken sick and died, and that her soul went to heaven, where it still continues. Soon after, her body was reanimated with the spirit and power of Christ, upon which she set up as a public teacher, and declared that she had an immediate revelation. Now the Scriptures positively assert that "Christ is the first fruit, afterwards those that are Christ's at His coming, then cometh the end." But Jemimah, according to her testimony, died, and rose again before the time mentioned in the Scriptures. The idea of her soul being in heaven while her body was [living] on earth, is also preposterous. When God breathed into man's nostrils, he became a living soul, before that he did not live, and when that was taken away his body died; and so did our Savior when the spirit left the body, nor did His body live until His spirit returned in the power of His resurrection. But Mrs. Wilkinson's soul [life] was in heaven, and her body without the soul [or life] on earth, living [without the soul, or] without life.

Irvingites

The Irvingites are a people that have counterfeited the truth, perhaps the nearest of any of our modern sectarians. They commenced about ten years ago in the city of London, in England; they have churches formed in various parts of England and Scotland, and some few in Upper Canada. Mr. Irving, their founder, was a learned and talented minister of the Church of Scotland, he was a great logician, and a powerful orator, but withal wild and enthusiastic in his

views. Moving in the higher circles, and possessing talent and zeal, placed him in a situation to become a conspicuous character, and to raise up a society similar to that which is called after his name.

The Irvingites have apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and angels. They profess to have the gift of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues, and, in some few instances, to have the gift of healing.

The first prophetic spirit that was manifested was in some Misses Campbell that Mr. Irving met with, while on a journey in Scotland; they had [what is termed among their sect] "utterances," which were evidently of a supernatural agency. Mr. Irving, falling into the common error of considering all supernatural manifestations to be of God, took them to London with him, and introduced them into his church.

They were there honored as the prophetesses of God, and when they spoke, Mr. Irving or any of his ministers had to keep silence. They were peculiarly wrought upon before the congregation, and had strange utterances, uttered with an unnatural, shrill voice, and with thrilling intonations they frequently made use of a few broken, unconnected sentences, that were ambiguous, incoherent, and incomprehensible; at other times they were more clearly understood. They would frequently cry out, "There is iniquity! There is iniquity!" And Mr. Irving has been led, under the influence of this charge, to fall down upon his knees before the public congregation, and to confess his sin, not knowing whether he had sinned, nor wherein, nor whether the thing referred to him or somebody else. During these operations, the bodies of the persons speaking were powerfully wrought upon, their countenances were distorted, they had frequent twitchings in their hands, and the whole system was powerfully convulsed at intervals: they sometimes, however, (it is supposed) spoke in correct tongues, and had true interpretations.

Under the influence of this spirit the church was organized by these women; apostles, prophets, etc., were soon called, and a systematic order of things introduced, as above mentioned. A Mr. Baxter (afterwards one of their principal prophets) upon going into one of their meetings, says, "I saw a power manifested, and thought that was the power of God, and asked that it might fall upon me, and it did so, and I began to prophesy." Eight or nine years ago they had about sixty preachers going through the streets of London, testifying that London was to be the place where the "two witnesses" spoken of by John, were to prophesy; that they the church and the spirit were the witnesses, and that at the end of three years and a half there was to be an earthquake and great destruction, and our Savior was to come. Their apostles were collected together at the appointed time watching the event, but Jesus did not come, and the prophecy was then ambiguously explained away. They frequently had signs given them by the spirit to prove to them that what was manifested to them should take place. Mr. Baxter related an impression that he had concerning a child. It was manifested to him that he should visit the child, and lay hands upon it, and that it should be healed; and to prove to him that this was of God, he should meet his brother in a certain place, who should speak unto him certain words. His brother addressed him precisely in the way and manner that the manifestation designated. The sign took place, but when he laid his hands upon the child it did not recover. I cannot vouch for the authority of the last statement, as Mr. Baxter at that time had left the Irvingites, but it is in accordance with many of their proceedings, and the thing never has been attempted to be denied.

All This Is Wrong

It may be asked, where is there anything in all this that is wrong?

First. The church was organized by women, and God placed in the Church (first apostles, secondarily prophets) not first women; but Mr. Irving placed in his church first women (secondarily apostles) and the church was founded and organized by them. A woman has no right to found or organize a church-God never sent them to do it.

Second. Those women would speak in the midst of a meeting, and rebuke Mr. Irving or any of the church. Now the Scripture positively says, "Thou shalt not rebuke an Elder, but entreat him as a father;" not only this, but they frequently accused the brethren, thus placing themselves in the seat of Satan, who is emphatically called "the accuser of the brethren."

Third. Mr. Baxter received the spirit on asking for it, without attending to the ordinances, and began to prophesy, whereas the scriptural way of attaining the gift of the Holy Ghost is by baptism, and by laying on of hands.

Fourth. As we have stated in regard to others, the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets; but those prophets were subject to the spirits, the spirits controlling their bodies at pleasure.

But it may be asked how Mr. Baxter could get a sign from a second person? To this we would answer, that Mr. Baxter's brother was under the influence of the same spirit as himself, and being subject to that spirit he could be easily made to speak to Mr. Baxter whatever the spirit should dictate; but there was not power in the spirit to heal the child.

Satan May Give Manifestations in Tongues

Again it may be asked, how it was that they could speak in tongues if they were of the devil. We would answer that they could be made to speak in another tongue, as well as their own, as they were under the control of that spirit, and the devil can tempt the Hottentot, the Turk, the Jew, or any other nation; and if these men were under the influence of his spirit, they of course speak Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Italian, Dutch, or any other language that the devil knew.

Some will say, "try the spirits" by the word. "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." 1 John 4:2, 3. One of the Irvingites once quoted this passage whilst under the influence of a spirit, and then said, "I confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." And yet these prophecies failed, their Messiah did not come; and the great things spoken of by them have fallen to the ground. What is the matter here? Did not the Apostle speak the truth? Certainly he did-but he spoke to a people who were under the penalty of death, the moment they embraced Christianity; and no one without a knowledge of the fact would confess it, and expose themselves to death, and this was consequently given as a criterion to the church or churches to which John wrote. But the devil on a certain occasion cried out, "I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God!" Here was a frank acknowledgment under other circumstances that "Jesus had come in the flesh." On another occasion the devil said, "Paul we know, and Jesus we know"-of course, "come in the flesh." No man nor sect of men without the regular constituted authorities, the Priesthood and discerning of spirits, can tell true from false spirits. This power they possessed in the Apostles' day, but it has departed from the world for a ges.

False Spirits in the Church

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has also had its false spirits; and as it is made up of all those different sects professing every variety of opinion, and having been under the influence of so many kinds of spirits, it is not to be wondered at if there should be found among us false spirits.

Soon after the Gospel was established in Kirtland, and during the absence of the authorities of the Church, many false spirits were introduced, many strange visions were seen, and wild, enthusiastic notions were entertained; men ran out of doors under the influence of this spirit, and some of them got upon the stumps of trees and shouted, and all kinds of extravagances were entered into by them; one man pursued a ball that he said he saw flying in the air, until he came to a precipice, when he jumped into the top of a tree, which saved his life; and many ridiculous things were entered into, calculated to bring disgrace upon the Church of God, to cause the Spirit of God to be withdrawn, and to uproot and destroy those glorious principles which had been developed for the salvation of the human family. But when the authorities returned, the spirit was made manifest, those members that were exercised with it were tried for their fellowship, and those that would not repent and forsake it were cut off.

At a subsequent period a Shaker spirit was on the point of being introduced, and at another time the Methodist and Presbyterian falling down power, but the spirit was rebuked and put down, and those who would not submit to rule and good order were disfellowshipped. We have also had brethren and sisters who have had the gift of tongues falsely; they would speak in a muttering, unnatural voice, and their bodies be distorted like the Irvingites before alluded to; whereas, there is nothing unnatural in the Spirit of God. A circumstance of this kind took place in Upper Canada, but was rebuked by the presiding Elder; another, a woman near the same place, professed to have the discerning spirits, and began to accuse another sister of things that

she was not guilty of, which she said she knew was so by the spirit, but was afterwards proven to be false; she placed herself in the capacity of the "accuser of the brethren," and no person through the discerning of spirits can bring a charge against another, they must be proven guilty by positive evidence, or they stand clear.

There have also been ministering angels in the Church which were of Satan appearing as an angel of light. A sister in the state of New York had a vision, who said it was told her that if she would go to a certain place in the woods, and angel would appear to her. She went at the appointed time, and saw a glorious personage descending, arrayed in white, with sandy colored hair; he commenced and told her to fear God, and said that her husband was called to do great things, but that he must not go more than one hundred miles from home, or he would not return; whereas God had called him to go to the ends of the earth, and he has since been more than one thousand miles from home, and is yet alive. Many true things were spoken by this personage, and many things that were false. How, **it may be asked, was this known to be a bad angel? By the color of his hair; that is one of the signs that he can be known by, and by his contradicting a former revelation.**

We have also had brethren and sisters who have written revelations, and who have started forward to lead this Church. Such was a young boy in Kirtland, Isaac Russell, of Missouri, and Gladden Bishop, and Oliver Olney of Nauvoo. The boy is now living with his parents who have submitted to the laws of the Church. Mr. Russell stayed in Far West, from whence he was to go to the Rocky Mountains, led by three Nephites; but the Nephites never came, and his friends forsook him, all but some of the blood relations, who have since been nearly destroyed by the mob. Mr. Bishop was tried by the High Council, his papers examined, condemned and burned, and he cut off the Church. He acknowledged the justice of the decision, and said "that he now saw his error, for if he had been governed by the revelations given before, he might have known that no man was to write revelations for the Church, but Joseph Smith," and begged to be prayed for, and forgiven by the brethren. Mr. Olney has also been tried by the High Council and disfellowshipped, because he would not have his writings tested by the word of God; evidently proving that he loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil.