

**Alma 24:9-10**1 *Murder*

We do know that there are murders committed by Gentiles for which they at least can repent, be baptized, and receive a remission of their sins.

Bruce R. McConkie, *A new Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book,

2 Even among willful murderers there are grades and categories. There are ... [those] who kill for sadistic pleasure. There are those who kill in drunkenness, in rage, in anger, in jealousy. There are those who kill for gain, for power, for fear. There are those who kill for lust. They certainly will suffer different degrees of punishment hereafter.

Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969], 130-131.

**Alma 24:10**3 *"taken away guilt from our hearts"*

Eliminate guilt. I hope it goes without saying that guilt is not a proper motivational technique....

As mortals, we simply cannot do everything at once. Therefore we must do all things "in wisdom and order" (Mosiah 4:27). Often that will mean temporarily postponing attention to one priority in order to take care of another. Sometimes family demands will require your full attention. Other times professional responsibilities will come first. And there will be times when Church callings will come first....

We need to remember that Christ came to remove guilt by forgiving those who repent....

As the power of the Atonement begins to work in our lives, we come to understand that the Savior has already born the burden of our guilt. O that we may be wise enough to understand, to repent as necessary, and to let go of our guilt....

There will always be more we can do. There is always another family matter that needs attention, another lesson to prepare, another interview to conduct, another meeting to attend. We just need to be wise in [protecting] our health and in following the counsel that President Hinckley has given often to just do the best that we can.

M. Russell Ballard, *Ensign*, Nov. 2006 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2006], 19

4 "For some reason we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to redemption from the fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding' [Philippians 4:7]...

"We all make mistakes. Sometimes we harm ourselves and seriously injure others in ways that we alone cannot repair. We break things that we alone cannot fix. It is then in our nature to feel guilt and humiliation and suffering, which we alone cannot cure. That is when the healing power of the Atonement will help. "The Lord said, 'Behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent' [D&C 19:16]..."

"The Atonement has practical, personal, everyday value; apply it in your life. It can be activated with so simple a beginning as prayer. You will not thereafter be free from trouble and mistakes but can erase the guilt through repentance and be at peace."

Conference Report, Apr. 2001, 28-29; or *Ensign*, May 2001, 23-24.

### **Alma 24:12-13**

5

The miracle of forgiveness is available to all of those who turn from their evil doings and return no more, because the Lord has said in a revelation to us in our day: "...go your ways and sin no more; but unto that soul who sinneth [meaning again] shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God." (D&C 82:7)

Harold B. Lee, *Ensign*, July, 1973, 122-23.

### **Alma 24:16**

6

*We shall go to our God*

Some years ago a fire erupted in the middle of the night and completely destroyed a family's home. A neighbor came by to console a seven-year-old.... "Johnny, it's sure too bad your home burn down." Johnny thought a moment and then said, "Oh, that's where you're mistaken, Mr. Brown. That was not our home; that was just our house. We still have our home, we just don't have any place to put it right now.'

What a great principle taught by a child about home. What does that word bring to your mind—*home*? To some, an edifice. To others, a place to sleep, a place to eat, a place where worldly goods are stored.

Yet to others more spiritually inclined, it might mean where family is, where my heart is, a sacred place, a peaceful place, an escape from a wicked world.

The still small voice whispers yet a deeper meaning. Home is heaven. We are strangers here on earth. My real home is not here, but there. My challenge is to learn how to bring about a home here on earth similar to the celestial one I left.

Gene R. Cook, in Conference Report, Apr. 1984 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1984], 41.

### **Alma 24:17-19**

7

*Bury Weapons Deep*

In abandoning sin one cannot merely wish for better conditions. He must make them. He may need to come to hate the spotted garments and loathe the sin. He must be certain not only that he has abandoned the sin but that he has changed the situations surrounding the sin. He should avoid the places and conditions and circumstances where the sin occurred, for these could most readily breed it again. He must abandon the people with whom the sin was committed. He may not hate the persons involved but he must avoid them and everything associated with sin.... He must eliminate anything which would stir the old memories.

Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 171-172.

### **Alma 24:17-25**

8

*Willingness to Die*

The law of forgiveness and retribution... applies to individuals and to families, as well as to the Church at large. We are under commandment to forgive our enemies and suffer their abuses and smiting the first

time and second time, also the third time. [D&C 98:32-38] This is to be done in patience and in humility and prayer, hoping that the enemy might repent.... For all these abuses we will be rewarded if we endure them in patience.... This may to the most ordinary human being be a hard law to follow; but nevertheless it is the word of the Lord. One of the best illustrations of this spirit of enduring wrong rather than retaliating is found in the story of the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon. Because they refused to take up arms to defend themselves, but would rather lay down their lives than shed blood even in their own defense, they brought many of their enemies to repentance and to the kingdom of God. [Alma 24:17-25; 27:3] This is the doctrine of Jesus Christ as taught in the *Sermon on the Mount*. [Matt. 5:21-22, 43-44] If all peoples would accept this doctrine there could be no war, and all difficulties could be adjusted in righteousness. This doctrine was taught, so the Lord declared, to his people anciently. There are many things in the Old Testament in relation to the wars and battles of the Israelites in the meager record which has come down to us, which are made to appear to us that these people were cruel and vengeful, but the Lord says they went out to battle when they were guided by prophets and the spirit of revelation when the Lord commanded them.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, [Salt Lake City: The Council of the Twelve Apostles, 1953], 1:434-35; as quoted in Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to your Study of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976, 256

### 9 *Willingness to Die (Anti-Nephi-Lehies)*

"In 1979, . . . I was serving as president in the Mexico City North Mission. . . .A (community) meeting was called . . . at which Church members were given the following options: denounce the Church, leave the village, or be killed (not an idle threat). The members, particularly the women, said they knew the Church to be true and would not denounce it. They also indicated they had worked just as hard as the rest of the community to secure their homesteads, and they would not leave. Boldly stepping forward, they told their taunters if they were going to kill them, to get on with it. The moment grew tense as machetes were raised, then finally lowered while the Latter-day Saints stood up for that which the Spirit had testified to them to be true. These Saints eventually learned, as most of us do, that it is harder to live the gospel day by day than to die for it in an instant, but their early commitment came because the Spirit had touched their hearts and changed their lives."

John B. Dickson (*Ensign*, Feb. 1995, [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995], 7

10 A young man in Tonga by the name of Finau had heard the missionaries and believed their message and wanted to get baptized. He had a concern, however, as his father was adamantly opposed to his "becoming a Mormon." Finau was unmarried and still lived at home, even though he was old enough to be on his own. Since he was past "legal age" he did not need his father's permission to get baptized, but he loved his father and wanted to show respect for him.

Unfortunately, every time he talked to his father about getting baptized his father beat him. Even though Finau could have left home, he stayed and tried to explain to his father how he felt about the Church and how sure he was of his testimony. After several months it became evident that his father would not give his permission, so Finau felt he had no alternative but to get baptized without his father's blessing...

The missionaries... checked and found that he was indeed of legal age, that he had diligently though vainly tried to get his father's blessing, so they could see no reason why they should not baptize him.

Thus, after sincere prayer together, they arranged for a time and place to baptize Finau....

They were all dressed in white and together waded out into the ocean to get to a spot deep enough to perform the sacred ordinance of baptism.

Even though others were not told of the time or place, in some way the word had gotten to Finau's father several hours before, and in anger or desperation or both, he told his oldest son to "teach Finau a lesson." Encouraged by his father and drunken with anger, Finau's older brother got a large stick and headed for the beach.

He arrived at the beach just as the baptism was finished and Finau and the two elders were wading back to shore. In an anger-emboldened rage he uttered a blood-curdling scream and headed straight toward the three-some, who were now in fairly shallow water.

The two elders heard the scream, looked up, saw the stick and the charging brother, and quickly ran away. They yelled at Finau to follow them, but he quietly shook his head and simply stood there, his eyes full of peace. He raised his head and looked straight at his brother. The elders reached land and took cover in some nearby bushes just before the brother reached Finau. When the brother saw that Finau would not run but waited calmly for him with a look of perfect serenity, he hesitated for a moment—but only a moment. Then with a curse of anger he took the last couple of splashing steps, lifted his large stick, and sent it crashing across Finau's back. Finau still did move. Again and again the stick smashed into Finau's back, tearing his shirt and exposing huge red welts oozing with blood and pain. At last an extra heavy blow crumpled Finau to his knees, then another and another left him sprawled face down in the water.

An exultant cry rent the air, and a man drunken from anger staggered to shore and disappeared uncertainly down the trail. He had "taught his brother a lesson" and left a seemingly lifeless form floating partially submerged in the gently rolling ocean.

The two elders who witnessed all this came from their hiding places and somewhat embarrassed and very concerned, ran quickly to where Finau lay in the ocean, barely moving. They were grateful to see he was still breathing. They lifted him from the water and were sickened by what they saw. Getting beaten severely enough to raise welts and blood and tear fabric is painful enough, but to have that raw flesh submerged in salty ocean water and sand was more pain than they could comprehend. They shuddered, and wondered if Finau also had some broken bones or other unseen injuries.

Finau could hardly move, so they each took an arm and lifted him up and dragged him stumblingly to shore. As they got well onto land, Finau spoke for the first time and asked where they were going.

"To the hospital, or course," they replied. "We must get those wounds treated and see if there are any broken bones. You may have some serious back or rib problems."

"No," said Finau, "Not yet. I have only been baptized. I have not received the gift of the Holy Ghost nor been confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—God's kingdom on earth. See that log over there? Take me to it, sit me down, confer upon me the gift of the Holy Ghost, and confirm me a member of the Church. I want to be part of God's kingdom now."

"We'll do that tomorrow. You need to get some medical treatment now."

"No," Finau replied firmly. "Do it now. Who knows, you may be right, there may be serious physical problems. I may not even make it to the hospital or I may not be alive tomorrow. Of course, I am in pain,

but mostly I just feel numb. I am, however, in full control of my feelings and I want to become a member of God's kingdom now—please.”

The two elders looked around, sensing possible danger. They saw no one else, however, so they looked at each other, then at Finau, who was patiently waiting. They saw such a fire of faith and determination coming from his eyes that they sat him down on the log, laid their hands on his head, and by the power and authority of the priesthood of God gave him the gift of the Holy Ghost, confirmed him a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and under the inspiration of God gave him a special blessing that no permanent physical damage from the beating would afflict his body.

As they took their hands from his head there was calmness in their eyes—no more furtive glances at the surrounding bushes, only tears of gratitude for the faith of a committed Tongan Saint in these latter days. Finally they got him to the hospital, where he was checked, given some care, and released....

Finau stayed with the elders that night, but the next day he wanted to return to his home. They went with him and found his father, who, still filled with bitterness and anger, commanded him to leave home and never return. Finau's brother was nowhere to be found. The missionaries made arrangements for Finau to live with a member family....

Finau was eventually reconciled with his father and his family, many of whom (including both his father and his brother) later joined the Church....

His father eventually apologized to him and sought his forgiveness, telling him that his mind had been darkened at the time. Finau willingly, even anxiously, forgave him. Finau's back carried those physical scars throughout his life; his soul, however, remained unscarred by anger or desire for revenge.

John H. Groberg, *Heroes from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995], 51-54

### Alma 24:21-27

#### 11 *A Silver Lining*

“I have seen, at close range, the manner in which the Lord has turned disasters—war, occupation, and revolution—into blessings.

*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p. 168

12 “How extensive the present European war will be we do not know; but this we do know from prophecy, it will not result in the downfall of the ‘mother of harlots.’ There will be a time of peace, a time that will be more favorable to the promulgation of the Gospel, that you and I and whosoever of the servants of God he pleases may be sent to these European nations to fulfill the prophecy which I have referred to in the Book of Mormon, and establish the kingdom of God among all the nations of modern Europe . . . The wars that are now taking place will have a tendency, in some measure, to open the way for the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ to go and establish the Church and kingdom of God among those nations.”

*Orson Pratt, Masterful Discourses of Orson Pratt*, p. 141

13 [Referring to the Vietnam War] “Notwithstanding the evil and the tragedy, I see a silver thread shining through the dark and bloody tapestry of conflict. I see the finger of the Lord plucking some good from the

evil designs of the adversary. I see coming out of this conflict, as I have witnessed in other conflicts in Asia, an enlargement of the Lord's program."

Gordon B. Hinckley (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1968, p.21)

14

I make no defense of the war (Vietnam) from this pulpit. There is no simple answer. The problems are complex almost beyond comprehension. I seek only to call your attention to that silver thread, small but radiant with hope, shining through the dark tapestry of war, namely, the establishment of a bridgehead, small and frail now, but which somehow under the mysterious ways of God, will be strengthened and from which someday shall spring forth a great work affecting for good the lives of large numbers of our Father's children in Asia. Of that I have a certain faith.

I have seen a prototype of what will happen as I have witnessed the development of this work in others of the nations of Asia—in Korea where we now have some 3,000 members, among the Chinese of Taiwan and Hong Kong where we now have more than 8,000 members, among the Filipinos of whom there are 3,200 and in Japan and Okinawa where there are more than 11,000 Latter-day Saints.

This marvelous membership is the sweet fruit of seed once planted in dark years of war and in the troubled days immediately following, when good men of the priesthood, both civilian and military, through the example of their lives and the inspiration of their precepts, laid a foundation on which a great work has been established.

I read a letter just received from one of our brethren in Vietnam: "The other day in Phu Bai I saw a young member of the Church reading a paperback of *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* (so that he would be qualified to teach any who might ask about the Church). The book was filthy, his hands were filthy, but he didn't see the dirt because he was reading so intensely."

Conference Report, April 1968

15

"The king of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies instructed his people to bury their weapons deep in the ground that they might not be tempted to use them when their Lamanite brethren came to do battle against them. The people followed their king's instructions, viewing their actions as a 'testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood' (Alma 24:18). When the Lamanites attacked, the Anti-Nephi-Lehies 'went out to meet them, and prostrated themselves' on the ground before their attackers (Alma 24:21). The Lamanites killed a thousand and five of the Anti-Nephi-Lehies before the slaughter stopped. Why did the slaughter stop, and what were its consequences? From the account in Alma we learn the answers to these questions....

"Now when the Lamanites saw this they did forbear from slaying them, and there were many whose hearts had swollen.... For they repented of the things which they had done....

"...The people of God were joined that day by more than the number who had been slain; and those who had been slain were righteous people, therefore we have no reason to doubt but what they were saved."(Alma 24:24-260

"While the message of the story is not to insist on universal pacifism, we do learn that by not returning aggressions from others we can have a profound effect on them. Literally, we can change their hearts when we follow Christ's example and turn the other cheek. Our examples as peaceable followers of Christ inspire others to follow him"

*Living with Enthusiasm* [1996], 127-28

16 When righteous people die, we have no reason to doubt but that they are saved. That is, they are heirs of the celestial kingdom. When the righteous (those true to their gospel covenants) pass from this life to the next, they “are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow” (Alma 40:12). Since they have kept their second estate, the eternal promise is that they “shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:26). Given, then, that there is no apostasy in paradise, all who obtain that station have the sure promise of celestial glory in the day of resurrection.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992, Vol. 3, p.171.

17 Daniel Tyler records a conversation that he and Isaac Behunnin had with the Prophet Joseph Smith about the trials and persecutions to which the Prophet had been subject. As they talked, the Prophet observed that his greatest difficulties came at the hands of those who had once tasted of the things of the Spirit and then turned against them. To this, Elder Behunnin remarked: “If I should leave this Church, I would not do as those men have done; I would go to some remote place where Mormonism had never been heard of, settle down, and no one would ever learn that I knew anything about it.”

Joseph Smith replied: “Brother Behunnin, you don’t know what you would do. No doubt these men once thought as you do. Before you joined the Church, you stood on neutral ground. When the gospel was preached, good and evil were set before you. You could choose either or neither. There were two opposite masters inviting you to serve them. When you joined the Church you enlisted to serve God. When you did that you left the neutral ground, and you never can get back on it. Should you forsake the Master you enlisted to serve, it will be by the instigation of the evil one, and you will follow his dictation and be his servant.” (*Juvenile Instructor*, vol, xxvii, 1892, p.491.)

The rule for all ages seems to be that the most bitter enemies the prophets and kingdom of God will have are those who once embraced the faith and later were filled with an evil spirit and left. How strange it is that people leave the churches of the world by the hundreds of thousands every year to embrace the restored gospel with no feelings of bitterness toward those churches they have left! Yet when people leave the Church of Jesus Christ, frequently they cannot leave it alone, but must wear out their lives in bitter attacks against it. As Joseph Smith attested, there is no neutrality where the Church and kingdom of God are concerned. (See Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L Millet, *Sustaining and defending the Faith*, Chapter 1.)

Joseph Smith stated in 1834: “From apostates the faithful have received the severest persecutions. Judas was rebuked and immediately betrayed his Lord into the hands of His enemies, because Satan entered into him. There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the Gospel with full purpose of heart, which, if sinned against, the apostate is left naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing, and his end is to be burned. When once that light which was in them is taken from them they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors. What nearer friend on earth, or in heaven, had Judas like, seek the destruction

of those who were their greatest benefactors. What neared friend on earth, or in heaven, had Judas that the Savior? And his first object was to destroy Him (*Teachings*, p.67).

*Ibid*, 172-173

## 18 Alma 24 Conclusion

The second chapter of 1 Corinthians is an explanation by Paul of the need and purpose of the Spirit. He concludes by saying that through the Spirit the saints have "the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16.) In other words, when under the influence of the Spirit a person's thoughts become a reflection of how Jesus would think. The gospel of John carries this idea throughout its pages. Over and over we find Jesus saying that he spoke or acted in the place of the Father as the Father's agent. The third chapter of John explains how this can be: "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." (John 3:34.) That is, Jesus had the Spirit in full. The rest of the saints have it measured out to them as they are able to receive it. To the extent they receive the Spirit, they have the mind of the Lord and thus know him to that same extent. (See especially John 5:19-30.) This seems to be what Nephi meant when he promised that those who have the Holy Ghost can speak with the tongue of angels, "wherefore, they speak the words of Christ." (2 Nephi 32:2, 3)

BOM Institute Manual, p. 259

19 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 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.

Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, selected and arranged by Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976], 150

20 To know God in that full sense which will enable us to gain eternal salvation means that we must know what he knows, enjoy what he enjoys experience what he experiences. In New Testament language, we must "be like him." (1 John 3:2.)

But before we can become like him we must obey those laws that will enable us to acquire the character perfections, and attributes that he possesses.

And before we can obey these laws, we must learn what they are, we must learn of Christ and his gospel. We must learn "that salvation was, and is, and is to come, in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent." (Mosiah 3:18.) We must learn that baptism under the hands of a legal administrator is essential to salvation and that after baptism we must keep the commandments and "press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men." (2 Ne. 31:20.)

Our revelation says: "The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth." (D&C 93:36.)

Joseph Smith taught that "a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge" of God and his saving truths (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 217) and that "it is impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance" of Jesus Christ and the laws of his gospel. (D&C 131:6.)

We believe in gospel scholarship. We think that devout men everywhere, in and out of the Church should seek spiritual truth, should come to know God, should learn his laws, and should strive to live in harmony with them. There are no truths as important as those that pertain to God and his gospel, to the pure religion that he has revealed, to the terms and conditions whereby we may gain an inheritance with him in his kingdom.

Thus we find Deity commanding:

"Search these commandments. . . ." (D&C 1:37.)

". . . study my word which hath gone forth among the children of men. . . ." (D&C 11:22.)

". . . teach the principles of my gospel, which are in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of my gospel." (D&C 42:12.)

Thus we find Jesus saying:

"Search the prophets. . . ." (3 Ne. 23:5.)

"Search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39.)

"Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently. . . ." (3 Ne. 23:1.)

Christ is the great exemplar, the prototype of perfection and salvation: ". . . he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. . . ." (2 Ne. 31:10.)

Also: ". . . what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Ne. 27:27.)

I know of no better way to respond to Jesus' invitation, "learn of me" (Matt. 10:29), than to study the scriptures with a prayerful heart.

I know of no better way to heed his counsel, "follow thou me," than to live in harmony with the truths recorded in the scriptures, for as Nephi asked, ". . . can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?" (2 Ne. 31:10.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie, *Conference Report*, April 1966, Afternoon Meeting 79

## 21 *Conversion – Keeping Covenants*

The need of one's having a keen knowledge of the truth is paramount. So also is it that every Latter-day Saint should have a deep-rooted conviction of the justice of God, and an implicit confidence and faith in his being and mercy. To rightfully understand the gospel and to keep his commandments such knowledge is absolutely necessary. Let each person ask himself if in his soul there is a sharp and immovable conviction of these facts. Could anything that might occur to you, or might take place in the Church, or with her officers and authorities, change your faith in the purposes, and in the absolute justice and mercy of the Lord, or in the saving power of his gospel, the message of his salvation? If so your faith is not deep-rooted, and there is strong need of your becoming convinced.

Joseph F. Smith, *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1903, 7:53.

22 Sometimes the word converted is used to describe when a sincere individual decides to be baptized. However, when properly used, conversion means far more than that, for a new convert as well as the long-term member....

Stated simply, true conversion is the fruit of faith, repentance, and consistent obedience... True conversion will strengthen your capacity to do what you know you should do, when you should do it, regardless of the circumstances.

"Full Conversion Brings Happiness," *Ensign*, May 2002, 24-26.

23 As missionaries, and as future parents in Zion, we must remember that we don't change any faster than we make and keep commitments. The Lord calls them covenants. Our exaltation is determined by how well we have kept our baptismal, our priesthood, and our temple covenants. And when we keep those covenants, the promises and blessings are ours. I have learned that when covenants are deepened because our commitment is strong, our lives are different. If in your lives you find your selves vacillating, look deep into your souls and check your level of commitment to your covenants. And when your level of commitment to your covenants has deepened to where you feel that it is life eternal to keep them, you will be a missionary for life. You will help many souls come unto Christ. When you make covenants with the Lord at that altar in the temple, and you become a mother or father, and find yourselves missionaries of a whole different sort, you will find that you'll never be totally converted until you learn to make and keep covenants by committing yourselves to the Lord.

Our blessings here and hereafter are dependent upon keeping the covenants we make with God. We recovenant each week. This is how Heavenly Father helps us—by continually reminding us of our commitments to His law and His covenants. The Spirit will help us keep those covenants, and keeping those covenants will exalt us.

Ed J. Pinegar and Richard J. Allen, *Teachings and Commentaries on the Book of Mormon*, p.300

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Webster says the verb “convert,” means “to turn from one belief or course to another.” That “conversion” is “a spiritual and moral change attending a change of belief with conviction.” *As used in the scriptures, “converted” generally implies not merely mental acceptance of Jesus and his teachings but also a motivating faith in him and his gospel—a faith which works a transformation, an actual change in one’s understanding of life’s meaning and in his allegiance to God—in interest, in thought and in conduct. While conversion may be accomplished in stages, one is not really converted in the full sense of the term unless and until he is at heart a new person. “Born again” is the scriptural term.*

In one who is wholly converted, desire for things inimical (harmful) to the gospel of Jesus Christ has actually died, and substituted therefore is a lover of God with a fixed and controlling determination to keep his commandments. Paul told the Romans that such a one would walk in newness of life. “Know ye not,” he said, “that so many of us were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”

Peter taught that by walking in this “newness of life” one escapes “the corruption that is in the world through lust,” and by developing with himself faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity, he becomes a partaker “of the divine nature.”

One who walks in newness of life is converted. On the other hand, says Peter, “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (see Peter 1:1-9). Such a one is not converted, even though he may have been baptized....

From some of the Savior’s sayings it would seem that there might even be a people in high places whose conversion is not complete; for example, conversing with his apostles at his last supper, he said to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, 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” (Luke 22:31-32). From this it would appear that membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted, as we are here using the term, and having a testimony are not necessarily the same either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost gives the earnest seeker a witness of the truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith; that is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. (Of course one’s testimony continues to increase as he is converted.)

*Conversion is effected by divine forgiveness, which remits sins. The sequence is something like this. An honest seeker hears the message. He asks the Lord in prayer if it is true. The Holy Spirit gives him a witness. This is a testimony. If one’s testimony is strong enough, he repents and obeys the commandments. By such obedience he receives divine forgiveness which remits sins. Thus he is converted to a newness of life. His spirit is healed....*

Somebody recently asks how one could know when he is converted. The answer is simple. He may be assured of it by the power of the Holy Spirit his soul is healed. When this occurs, he will recognize it by the way he feels, for he will feel as the people of Benjamin felt when they received remission of sins. The record says “...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).

Getting people’s spirits healed through conversion is the only way they can be healed. I know this is an unpopular doctrine and a slow way to solve the problems and men and nations. As a matter of fact, I am convinced relatively few among the billions of earth’s inhabitants will be converted. Nevertheless, I know

and solemnly witness that there is no other means by which the sin-sick souls of men can be healed or for a troubled world to find peace. I know that the unbelieving will reject this divine way. But this is nothing new. They have been rejecting it ever since the time of Cain. They have from the beginning refused to accept Christ and his gospel. They killed the ancient prophets. They burned Abinadi. They stoned Samuel the Lamanite. They crucified the Lord himself. In our own day they martyred Joseph Smith Jr., the great prophet of the restoration. But all that has happened in the past has not, and all that occurs in the future will not, change the truth that conversion to Jesus Christ and his gospel is the one and only way; for still it must be said that "there is none other way given under heaven by which men must be saved" (see Acts 4:12). To this I witness in solemn testimony.

Marion G. Romney in Conference Report, Oct 1963, 23-26; italics added.

25 The only way that we may overcome the world is by coming unto Christ. And coming unto Christ means walking away from the world. It means placing Christ and Christ only at the center of our lives so that the vanities and philosophies of men lose their addictive appeal. Satan is the god of Babylon, or this world. Christ is the God of Israel, and His Atonement gives us power to overcome the world. "If you expect glory, intelligence and endless lives," said President Joseph Smith, "*let the world go*" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith [1998], 243; emphasis added*)

26 We no longer have the luxury of spending our energy on anything that does not lead us and our families to Christ.

Sherri L. Dew, "We Are Women of God", *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, p. 98.