

Alma 47:11-12,18**1** *By degrees*

It does not matter how small the sins are... The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft under foot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.

C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 64-65

2 [Some] people . . . are basically unrepentant because they are not “doing the commandments.” They are Church members who are steeped in lethargy. They neither drink nor commit the sexual sins. They do not gamble nor rob nor kill. They are good citizens and splendid neighbors, but spiritually speaking they seem to be in a long, deep sleep. They are doing nothing seriously wrong except in their failures to do the right things to earn their exaltation.

Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, 211-12

Alma 47:22*Reverence*

Reverence is profound respect mingled with love. It is “a complex emotion made up of mingled feelings of the soul.” [One writer] says it is “the highest of human feelings.” I have said elsewhere that if reverence is the highest, then irreverence is the lowest state in which a man can live in the world...

Reverence is the fundamental virtue in religion. It is “one of the signs of strength; irreverence, one of the surest indications of weakness. No man will rise high,” says one man, “who jeers at sacred things”...

Parents, *Reverence*, as charity, begins at home...

Three influences in home life awaken reverence in children and contribute to its development in their souls. These are: *first*, firm but *Gentle Guidance*; *second* *Courtesy* shown by parents to each other, and to children; and *third*, *Prayer* in which children participate....

I look upon reverence as one of the highest qualities of the soul. An irreverent man is not a believing man... I am prompted to place reverence next to love. Jesus mentioned it first in the Lord's prayer: “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thou name... ” (Matthew 6:9). *Hallow*—to make holy—to hold in reverence.

If there were more reverence in human hearts, there would be less room for sin and sorrow.

Teachings of Presidents of the Church—David O. McKay [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 30-31.

Alma 47:36

3 When the national crash came most of the brethren were swept into the financial vortex. Many of those who lost their means in this panic, and who had subscribed for stock in the Kirtland Society, laid the blame for their loss at the door of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The fact is that he had warned them of these dangers, but they had turned a deaf ear to all his pleadings. Now that the crash had come they became bitter in their souls and we find men who had stood in the councils of the Church, who had witnessed the visions of angels and had in apparent humility pledged themselves to give all to the building up of the kingdom of God, now turning away in bitterness and their love for the Prophet and those who loyally stood by him, turned to hate. The Prophet said it seemed “as though all the powers of earth and hell were combining their influence in an especial manner to overthrow the Church at once, and make a final end.” Enemies not in the Church aided these apostates and united with them in various schemes to overthrow the Prophet looking upon him as the cause of all the evils that had come upon them. This apostasy found its way into all of the councils of the Church.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946-1949], 3:92

4 After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, 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 are opened unto 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. This is the case with many apostates of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When a man begins to be an enemy to this work, he hunts me, he seeks to kill me, and never ceases to thirst for my blood. He gets the spirit of the devil—the same spirit that they had who crucified the Lord of life—the same spirit that sins against the Holy Ghost. You cannot save such persons; you cannot bring them to repentance; they make open war, like the devil, and awful is the consequence.

Joseph Smith, *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Alma P. Burton [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977], 222

5 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 this 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 this Church you enlisted to serve God. When you did that you left the neutral ground, and you never can get back on to 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."

As cited in Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 3:172

6 There are the dissenters who leave the Church, either formally or informally, but who cannot leave it alone. Usually anxious to please worldly galleries, they are critical or at least condescending towards the Brethren. They not only seek to steady the ark but also on occasion give it a hard shove! Often having been taught the same true doctrine as the faithful, they have nevertheless moved in the direction of dissent (see Alma 47:36). They have minds hardened by pride (see Daniel 5:20).

Neal A. Maxwell, *Men and Women of Christ* [1991], 4.

7 "He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me [saith the Lord]...(3 Nephi 11:29-30)...
Throughout the world, Saints of the Lord... have learned that the path of dissent leads to real dangers. The Book of Mormon carries this warning:
" not long after their dissensions they became more hardened and impenitent, and , more wild, wicked and ferocious...; giving way to indolence, and all manner of lasciviousness; yea, entirely forgetting the Lord their God (Alma 47:36).

How divisive is the force of dissension! Small acts can lead to such great consequences. Regardless of position or situation, no one can safely assume immunity to contention's terrible call...

Russell M. Nelson, "Contention fosters disunity" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 86-89; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 68, 70.