

## Chapter One

# *This Life Is the Time*

*... For all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end<sup>\*</sup> when men are dead.*

—Doctrine & Covenants 132:7

*For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God*

—Alma 34:32

IS THE DESTINY OF THE SPIRITS OF MEN TO COME TO this earth and travel a journey of indeterminate length, travel sometimes dangerously, sometimes safely, sometimes sadly, sometimes happily. Always the road is marked with a purpose.

The journey leads through infancy with its carefree times but rapid learning; through childhood with its disappointments and stubbed toes, its injured feelings, teen excitements; through youth with its exuberance, likes and dislikes, its fears and hopes and intensities; through the young married period with its responsibilities, competitions, its ambitions, its family-rearing, its accounting; and through older age with its achievements, nations, goal-reaching, relaxation and retirement.

Throughout the entire journey there is opportunity for learning and growth and development toward the final



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to guide them, they just travel along the way and in varying degrees pick up such things as will please the eye, tickle the vanities, satisfy hungers, quench thirsts, satisfy passions. And when the end of life draws nigh they have traveled but are little if any closer to their proper destination than when they started. Regrettably, some have totally lost their way.

### *Life's Divine Purpose*

On the other hand, there are some who chart their courses, make wise, right decisions, and in large measure achieve their goals and reach their happy destinations. In doing this they are cooperating with the Creator in his stated purpose of life: "For behold, this is my work and my glory — to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." (Moses 1:39.)

Since immortality and eternal life constitute the sole purpose of life, all other interests and activities are but incidental thereto. And since those objectives are the work and glory of God, they are the proper work of man also and are the major reason for his coming to earth. Of the two elements, the one great blessing — immortality — comes to man without his effort, as a gift from the Almighty. The other — eternal life — is a cooperative program to be developed by the Lord and his offspring on earth. It thus becomes the overall responsibility of man to cooperate fully with the Eternal God in accomplishing this objective. To this end God created man to live in mortality and endowed him with the potential to perpetuate the race, to subdue the earth, to perfect himself and to become as God, omniscient and omnipotent.

Our Father then sent to the earth a line of prophets to keep man in remembrance of his duties and his destiny, to warn him of dangers, and to point the way to his total victory. It appears that the spiritual perceptions of many



and issued solemn warnings. Again and again in different phraseology and throughout the centuries the Lord has reminded man so that he could never have excuse. And the burden of the prophetic warning has been that *the time to act is now, in this mortal life*. One cannot with impunity delay his compliance with God's commandments.

Note Amulek's words, especially those forceful statements involving timing, which are in italics:

Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden<sup>\*</sup> not your hearts any longer; for behold, *now is the time and the day of your salvation*; and therefore, if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

For behold, *this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God*; yea, behold *the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors*.

And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; *for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity*, behold, if we do not improve our time *while in this life*, then cometh *the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed*.

*Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God*. Nay, ye cannot say this; *for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world*. (Al. 34:21-34. Italics added.)

Even if we leave aside the many scriptures which bear similar testimony, reading and prayerfully meditating upon this one brings an awe-inspiring conviction of the need to repent — *now!*

From the modern apostle Melvin J. Ballard we obtain an emphasis of Amulek's expression in these terms:

... But this life is the time in which men are to repent. Do not let any of us imagine that we can go down to the grave not having overcome the corruptions of the flesh and then lose in the grave all our sins and evil tendencies. They will be with us. They will be with the spirit when separated from the body.



It is my judgment that any man or woman can do more to conform to the laws of God in one year in this life than they could do in ten years when they are dead. The spirit only can repent and change, and then the battle has to go forward with the flesh afterwards. It is much easier to overcome and serve the Lord when both flesh and spirit are combined as one. This is the time when men are more pliable and susceptible. We will find when we are dead every desire, every feeling will be greatly intensified. When clay is pliable it is much easier to change than when it gets hard and sets.

This life is the time to repent. That is why I presume it will take a thousand years after the first resurrection until the last group will be prepared to come forth. It will take them a thousand years to do what it would have taken but three-score and ten to accomplish in this life.<sup>2</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith's revelation of 1918 contains these words: "... the dead had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage."<sup>3</sup> Another quotation from Elder Ballard amplifies President Smith's thought:

... When we go out of this life, leave this body, we will desire to do many things that we cannot do at all without the body. We will be seriously handicapped, and we will long for the body; we will pray for that early reunion with our bodies. We will know then what advantage it is to have a body.

Then, every man and woman who is putting off until the next life the task of correcting and overcoming the weakness of the flesh are sentencing themselves to years of bondage, for no man or woman will come forth in the resurrection until they have completed their work, until they have overcome, until they have done as much as they can do.<sup>4</sup>

### *Eternal Marriage Now for Latter-day Saints*

Nowhere is the time element more fully stressed than in the matter of eternal marriage. It is true that a merciful Father makes special post-mortal provision for those who do not hear the gospel in this life, but for Latter-day Saints

<sup>2</sup>Melvin J. Ballard, "Three Degrees of Glory."

<sup>3</sup>Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966), p. 475.



## No Unclean Thing Can Enter

*. . . 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 . . .*

—Moses 6:57

AS WE DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER 1, THE ROAD OF LIFE is plainly marked according to the divine purpose, the map of the gospel of Jesus Christ is made available to the travelers, the destination of eternal life is clearly established. At that destination our Father waits hopefully, anxious to greet his returning children. Unfortunately, many will not arrive.

The reason is forthrightly stated by Nephi — “. . . There cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God . . .” (1 Ne. 15:34.) And again, “. . . no unclean thing can dwell with God . . .” (1 Ne. 10:21.) To the prophets the term *unclean* in this context means what it means to God. To man the word may be relative in meaning — one minute speck of dirt does not make a white shirt or dress unclean, for example. But to God who is perfection, cleanliness means moral and personal cleanliness. Less than that is, in one degree or another, uncleanliness and hence cannot dwell with God.



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Murder, adultery, theft, cursing, unholiness in masters, disobedience in servants, unfaithfulness, improvidence, hatred of God, disobedience to husbands, lack of natural affection, high-mindedness, flattery, lustfulness, infidelity, indiscretion, backbiting, whispering, lack of truth, striking, brawling, quarrelsomeness, unthankfulness, inhospitality, deceitfulness, irreverence, boasting, arrogance, pride, double-tongued talk, profanity, slander, corruptness, thievery, embezzlement, despoiling, covenantbreaking, incontinence, filthiness, ignobleness, filthy communications, impurity, foolishness, slothfulness, impatience, lack of understanding, unmercifulness, idolatry, blasphemy, denial of the Holy Ghost, Sabbath breaking, envy, jealousy, malice, maligning, vengefulness, implacability, bitterness, clamor, spite, defiling, reviling, evil speaking, provoking, greediness for filthy lucre, disobedience to parents, anger, hate, covetousness, bearing false witness, inventing evil things, fleshliness, heresy, presumptuousness, abomination, insatiable appetite, instability, ignorance, self-will, speaking evil of dignitaries, becoming a stumbling block; and in our modern language, masturbation, petting, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, and every sex perversion, every hidden and secret sin and all unholy and impure practices.

These are transgressions the Lord has condemned through his servants. Let no one rationalize his sins on the excuse that a particular sin of his is not mentioned nor forbidden in scripture.

#### *Purity Essential to Eternal Life*

Whoever else suffers, every sin is against God, for it tends to frustrate the program and purposes of the Almighty.



thousands of teen-age drug addicts. Despite local, national, and international efforts to curb the distribution of such narcotics, a U. S. Senate crime investigating committee found such drugs easy to get in most of the nation's cities.

One should shun this habit as he would any deadly plague. Young people as well as older ones should beware of tampering with such injurious habits as glue-sniffing, taking LSD, smoking marijuana cigarettes, and so on. These are not only sinful in and of themselves, but will lead to more serious drug habits and to the addict's spiritual, moral, and physical downfall. All such narcotic habits should be repented of and ever after shunned. Even sleeping pills, tranquilizers and such which were thought to be harmless have sometimes brought injury and death; these might well be limited or avoided and, if used at all, taken only under the strict supervision of a reputable physician.

### *Covenantbreakers*

Akin to many of the other sins is that of the covenant-breaker. The person baptized promises to keep all the laws and commandments of God. He has partaken of the sacrament and re-pledged his allegiance and his fidelity, promising and covenanting that he will keep all God's laws. Numerous folks have gone to the temples and have re-covenanted that they would live all the commandments of God, keep their lives clean, devoted, worthy, and serviceable. Yet many there are who forget their covenants and break the commandments, sometimes deliberately tempting the faithful away with them.

Of those who break covenants and promises made in sacred places and in solemn manner, we can apply the Lord's words as follows:

... a wicked man, who has set at naught the counsels of God, and has broken the most sacred promises which were made before God, and has depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom. (D&C 3:12-13.)



conquered by yourself is of all things most shameful and vile."

Our ills are usually of our own begetting. They must be corrected by ourselves. Man is the master of his destiny, be it good or bad. Man has the inherent capacity to heal himself physically. A doctor may cleanse a wound, sew it up, bandage it well, but the natural power of the body must do the healing. Likewise, a healing process in the spirit and mind must come from within — from self-will. Others may help to cauterize the wound, suture it, and provide a clean, proper environment for the healing, but the body, with the aid of the Spirit, must heal itself. Accordingly some totally conquer homosexuality in a few months, others linger on with less power and require more time to make the total comeback. The cure is as permanent as the individual makes it and, like the cure for alcoholism, is subject to continued vigilance.

Men have come to their Church leaders dejected, discouraged, embarrassed, terrified, and have gone out later full of confidence and faith in themselves, enjoying self-respect and the confidence of their families. In some cases, wives have come in to express tearful thanks for bringing their husbands back to them. They have not always known what the problem was, but they had sensed it and realized they had lost their husbands. Men have come first with downward glances and have left the final interview months later looking the interviewer straight in the eye. After the first interview, some have admitted: "I'm glad I was arrested. I have tried and tried to correct my error but knew I'd have to have help and had not the courage to ask for it."

Of all the numerous people who have come through this special Church program, very few have been excommunicated. (These few were belligerent and rebellious and unyielding, and practically demanded such action.) Our method is one we think would be approved by the Savior. We remind the person of his likeness to and affinity with God:



## Chapter Nine

## Point of No Return

*But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of sins in this world nor in the world to come.*

—Doctrine & Covenants 84:41

IT IS TRUE THAT THE GREAT PRINCIPLE OF REPENTANCE is always available, but for the wicked and rebellious there are serious reservations to this statement. For instance, sin is intensely habit-forming and sometimes moves men to the tragic point of no return. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness, and without forgiveness all the blessings of eternity hang in jeopardy. As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly near-hopeless, and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back or he has lost the power to do so.

*Everlastingly Too Late*

Perhaps the Book of Mormon contains the best examples and references on this. In the words of Amulek:

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 doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you,



several days after the people asked, "What shall we do?" Peter says, "I would ye had done it ignorantly," speaking of crucifying the Lord, etc. He did not say to them, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins"; but he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

This is the case with murderers. They could not be baptized for the remission of sins, for they had shed innocent blood."<sup>11</sup>

To Church members the word is clear:

And now, behold, I speak unto the church. Thou shalt not kill; and he that kills shall not have forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come. (D&C 42:18.)

And it shall come to pass, that if any persons among you shall kill they shall be delivered up and dealt with according to the laws of the land; for remember that he hath no forgiveness; and it shall be proved according to the laws of the land. (D&C 42:79.)

When a member of the Church is adjudged guilty of murder or what seems to approach the terrible crime, consideration should be given to excommunication, which in most cases is the penalty required.

### *Avoid the First Steps*

Even unpardonable sins should be repented of. The murderer does not have eternal life abiding in him, but a merciful God will grant to every soul adequate rewards for every good deed he does. God is just. He will compensate for every effort to do good, to repent, to overcome sin. Even the murderer is justified in repenting and mending his ways and building up a credit balance in his favor.

Much better is it to avoid the steps which lead to unforgivable sin. Thus as a preventive measure against murder one should avoid anger and hatred, avarice and greed, and any of the other impulses which can spark the act. Nephi said his brothers were murderers at heart. One usually will commit the deed in his thoughts many times before he will deliberately commit the crime in actuality.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.



## Repent or Perish

*... Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

—Luke 13:3

**R**EPENTANCE IS THE KEY TO FORGIVENESS. IT OPENS the door to happiness and peace and points the way to salvation in the kingdom of God. It unlocks the spirit of humility in the soul of man and makes him contrite of heart and submissive to the will of God.

“Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4.), and for such transgression a punishment is affixed under eternal law. Every normal individual is responsible for the sins he commits, and would be similarly liable to the punishment attached to those broken laws. However, Christ’s death on the cross offers us exemption from the eternal punishment for most sins. He took upon himself the punishment for the sins of all the world, with the understanding that those who repent and come unto him will be forgiven of their sins and freed from the punishment.

### *Message of the Ages*

In these circumstances it is not surprising that through his prophets a loving God has constantly emphasized the call to repentance. It would be interesting if we could have a recording of each dispensation of the gospel in sequence, and hear the pleas and commands for repentance repeated



# Abandonment of Sin

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*By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins — behold, he will confess them and forsake them.*

Doctrine & Covenants 58:43

THERE IS ONE CRUCIAL TEST OF REPENTANCE. THIS IS abandonment of the sin. Providing that a person discontinues his sin with the right motives — because of a growing consciousness of the gravity of the sin and a willingness to comply with the laws of the Lord — he is genuinely repenting. This criterion has been set by the Lord: “By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins — behold, he will confess them and *forsake them*.” (D&C 58:43. Italics added.)

## *Desire Is Not Sufficient*

In other words, it is not real repentance until one has abandoned the error of his way and started on a new path. Someone has said that there is only one way to quit a bad habit and that is to stop. The saving power does not extend to him who merely *wants* to change his life. *True repentance prods one to action.*



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struggle is strength. Life is a battle and the greatest joy is to overcome. The pursuit of easy things makes men weak. Do not equip yourselves with superior power and hope to escape the responsibility and work. It cannot be done. It is following the lines of least resistance that makes rivers and men crooked.

### *Trying Is Not Sufficient*

Nor is repentance complete when one merely *tries* to abandon sin. To try with a weakness of attitude and effort is to assure failure in the face of Satan's strong counteracting efforts. What is needed is resolute action. - A story will perhaps illustrate this.

An army officer called a soldier to him and ordered him to take a message to another officer. The soldier saluted and said, "I'll try, sir! I'll try!" To this the officer responded: "I don't want you to *try*, I want you to deliver this message." The soldier, somewhat embarrassed, now replied: "I'll do the best I can, sir." At this the officer, now disgusted, rejoined with some vigor: "I don't want you to *try* and I don't want you to 'do the best you can.' I want you to deliver this message." Now the young soldier, straightening to his full height, approached the matter magnificently, as he thought, when he saluted again and said: "I'll do it or die, sir." To this the now irate officer responded: "I don't want you to die, and I don't want you merely to do the best you can, and I don't want you to try. Now, the request is a reasonable one; the message is important; the distance is not far; you are able-bodied; you can do what I have ordered. Now get out of here and accomplish your mission."

It is normal for children to try. They fall and get up numerous times before they can be certain of their footing. But adults, who have gone through these learning periods,



must determine what they will do, then proceed to do it. To "try" is weak. To "do the best I can" is not strong. We must always do *better* than we can.\* This is true in every walk of life. We have a companion who has promised: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (Matt. 7:7.) With the inspiration from the Lord we can rise higher than our individual powers, extend far beyond our own personal potential.

### *No Forgiveness Without Repentance*

This connection between effort and the repentance which attracts the Lord's forgiveness is often not understood. In my childhood, Sunday School lessons were given to us on the 8th chapter of John wherein we learned of the woman thrown at the feet of the Redeemer for judgment. My sweet Sunday School teacher lauded the Lord for having forgiven the woman. She did not understand the impossibility of such an act. In my years since then I have repeatedly heard people praise the Lord for his mercy in having forgiven the adulteress. This example has been used numerous times to show how easily one can be forgiven for gross sin.

But did the Lord forgive the woman? Could he forgive her? There seems to be no evidence of forgiveness. His command to her was, "Go, and sin no more." He was directing the sinful woman to go her way, *abandon her evil life, commit no more sin, transform her life*. He was saying, Go, woman, and start your repentance; and he was indicating to her the beginning step — to *abandon her transgressions*.

The Lord's prophet Amulek had said emphatically: "... Ye cannot be saved *in* your sins." (Al. 11:37. Italics added.) It was this same Lord Jesus Christ who made the laws, and he must observe them. Accordingly, how could he have forgiven the woman in her deep sin? When she had



the Lord's death. Again

how could his Father forgive them, when they were not repentant. These vicious people who cried, "... His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25) had not repented. Those who "reviled him" on Calvary (Matt. 27:39) had not repented. The Jewish leaders who tried Jesus illegally, demanded his crucifixion from Pilate, and incited the mob to their vilest actions had not repented. Nor had the Roman soldiers who, though no doubt obligated under their military law to crucify Jesus as instructed, were under no compulsion to add the insults and cruelties to which they subjected the Savior prior to his crucifixion.

Could the Lord forgive Pilate? Certainly he could not without Pilate's repentance. Did Pilate repent? We do not know what Pilate did after the scripture drops him. He had a desire to favor the Savior.\* He did not display full courage in resisting the pressures of the people. Could he have saved the life of the Lord? Again, we do not know. We leave Pilate to the Lord as we do all other sinners, but remember that "to know and not to do" is sin.

### *Repentance Takes Time*

Repentance is inseparable from time. No one can repent on the cross, nor in prison, nor in custody. One must



have the opportunity of committing wrong in order to be really repentant. The man in handcuffs, the prisoner in the penitentiary, the man as he drowns, or as he dies — such a man certainly cannot repent totally. He can wish to do it, he may intend to change his life, he may determine that he will, but that is only the beginning.

That is why we should not wait for the life beyond but should abandon evil habits and weaknesses while in the flesh on the earth. Elder Melvin J. Ballard pinpointed this problem:

A man may receive the priesthood and all its privileges and blessings, but until he learns to overcome the flesh, his temper, his tongue, his disposition to indulge in the things God has forbidden, he cannot come into the celestial kingdom of God — he must overcome either in this life or in the life to come. But this life is the time in which men are to repent. Do not let any of us imagine that we can go down to the grave not having overcome the corruptions of the flesh and then lose in the grave all our sins and evil tendencies. They will be with us. They will be with the spirit when separated from the body.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly it is difficult to repent in the spirit world of sins involving physical habits and actions. There one has spirit and mind but not the physical power to overcome a physical habit. He can desire to change his life, but how can he overcome the lusts of the flesh unless he has flesh to control and transform? How can he overcome the tobacco or the drink habit in the spirit world where there is no liquor nor tobacco and no flesh to crave it? Similarly with other sins involving lack of control over the body.

### *Repentance Easier Before Sin Is Entrenched*

While repentance is possible at any stage in the process of sin it is certainly easier in the early stages. Sinful habits may be compared to a river which flows slowly and placidly at first then gains speed as it nears the falls over the precipice. Where it is slow and quiet, one can cross it in a rowboat with relative ease. As the stream flows faster it be-



might still be saved from destruction. Likewise, in the case of sin, it is relatively easy to repent at first, but as the sin becomes more and more entrenched the overcoming becomes increasingly difficult.

If one ignores the roar of the falls below, he is doomed; if he will not listen to the warnings given him, he is sucked into the swift current to destruction.

We can use another analogy from nature. Early settlers in the Gila Valley in Arizona stated that when they first arrived they could jump across the little trickle of water running down the San Simon Valley, a small tributary of the Gila River. But the overgrazed valley yielded to erosion. The little freshets of water followed the cow trails and cut deep ruts. Each succeeding storm stream undermined the dirt walls, making the gorge ever deeper and wider. The undercut walls caved in and the cow trail became a rut. The rut became a deep wash, and the wash became a very wide and very deep and almost uncrossable chasm.

So it is with transgression. When a sin is repeated again and again, the channel gets deeper and deeper. And even though the gash in the earth may be filled, any flood of water is likely again to find the bed of the wash and follow it, making it even deeper. Similarly, even though sin be abandoned and forgiven, careless or deliberate action can bring it back.

### *Forgiveness Cancelled on Reversion to Sin*

Old sins return, says the Lord in his modern revelation. Many people either do not know this or they conveniently forget it. "Go your ways and sin no more," the Lord warned.



And again, "... Unto that soul who sinneth shall the former sins return, saith the Lord your God." (D&C 82:7.)

Would this mean that the person who has returned to the sins he has professedly abandoned must start the process of repentance again from the beginning? that one cannot return to sin and then start repentance from where he left off?

To return to sin is most destructive to the morale of the individual and gives Satan another hand-hold on his victim. Those who feel that they can sin and be forgiven and then return to sin and be forgiven again and again must straighten out their thinking. Each previously forgiven sin is added to the new one and the whole gets to be a heavy load.

Thus when a man has made up his mind to change his life, there must be no turning back. Any reversal, even in a small degree, is greatly to his detriment. The reformed alcoholic who takes "just a little sip" again may have lost all the ground he has gained. The pervert who relaxes and returns to old companions or situations is in grave danger again. The former cigarette addict who smokes just one more cigarette is on his way back to addiction. It was Mark Twain who said he knew he could quit smoking because he had done it a thousand times. When one quits, he must quit. Generally, those who try to taper off find it an impossible task.

One man who had been a slave to alcohol most of his adult life became convinced through the various Church programs that he must give up the habit and prepare himself for the temple program. With great effort he quit drinking. He moved many miles away from the area where his drinking friends lived and, though his body craved and ached and gnawed for the long-depended-on stimulant, he finally conquered. He was at all his Church meetings, and was paying his tithing. His new friends in the Church seemed to fortify him. He felt good in the new activity.



## Chapter Fifteen

# Keeping God's Commandments Brings Forgiveness

*Nevertheless, he that repents and does the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven.*

—Doctrine & Covenants 1:32

*And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments.*

—Doctrine & Covenants 59:21

**I**N HIS PREFACE TO MODERN REVELATION, THE LORD OUTLINED what is one of the most difficult requirements in true repentance. For some it is the hardest part of repentance, because it puts one on guard for the remainder of his life. The Lord says:

... I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance;

Nevertheless, he that repents and *does the commandments of the Lord* shall be forgiven. (D&C 1:31-32. Italics added.)

This scripture is most precise. First, one repents. Having gained that ground he then must live the commandments



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needs to be concerned lest he cannot properly friends the gospel. The set-apart missionaries are equipped to do that. What every member ought to do, by good example and by bearing testimony, is to portray to nonmembers the joys of gospel living and understanding, and thus help to bring them to the stage where they will accept more formal teaching.

In addition to the possibilities in missionary work, in areas such as quorum and auxiliary and committee work of the Church almost limitless opportunities are afforded to lift others, thus blessing oneself. Monthly there are testimony meetings held where each one has the opportunity to bear witness. To by-pass such opportunities is to fail to that extent to pile up credits against the accumulated errors and transgressions.

### *Faith and Works*

In view of the emphasis thus far made on the importance of good works in returning from sin and establishing a repentant life, it may be well to say a word about the idea of salvation by faith alone. Some people not of our Church like to quote, in support of that concept, the following words of Paul:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Eph. 2:8-9.)

One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation. Along with all\* the other works



necessary for man's exaltation in the kingdom of God this could rule out the need for repentance. It could give license for sin and, since it does not require man to work out his salvation, could accept instead lip service, death-bed "repentance," and shallow, meaningless confession of sin.

Church members are fortunate indeed to have scriptures brought forth in this age which clarify this and other doctrinal questions beyond all doubt. One passage in the Book of Mormon, written perhaps with the same intent as Paul's statement above — to stress and induce appreciation for the gracious gift of salvation offered on condition of obedience — is particularly enlightening:

For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*. (2 Ne. 25:23, Italics added.)

And the Lord further emphasized the fact:

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.

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. (3 Ne. 27:19-20.)

This makes clear the two facets, neither of which alone would bring the individual salvation — the grace of Christ, particularly as represented by his atoning sacrifice, and individual effort. However good a person's works, he could not be saved had Jesus not died for his and everyone else's sins. And however powerful the saving grace of Christ, it brings exaltation to no man who does not comply with the works of the gospel.

Of course we need to understand terms. If by the word "salvation" is meant the mere salvation or redemption from the "power of God" is sufficient. But if the term



civil, and the good  
exhortations of the Savior and his prophets and apostles.

Few, if any, have understood these matters better than the Apostle Paul, who would have been surprised that any other construction should be put upon his words. Throughout his writings he stresses the importance of deeds of righteousness. He preaches against sin of any kind, urging repentance and indicating that forgiveness is a necessary element of salvation. He declares in his Epistle to the Romans that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all . . . unrighteousness of men . . ." (Rom. 1:18.) He not only condemns all evil things but promises that God "will render to every man according to his deeds." (Rom. 2:6.) He promises eternal life to those "who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality." (Rom. 2:7.) He emphasizes, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. 2:13.) And as discussed previously in this book, he points out specific sins in considerable number and calls on men to repent of them.

### *Repentant Life Seeks Perfection*

One could multiply references almost indefinitely but enough has been said to establish the point that the repentant life, the life which constantly reaches for perfection, must rely on works as well as on faith. The gospel is a program of action — of *doing* things. Man's immortality and eternal life are God's goals. (Moses 1:39.) Immortality has been accomplished by the Savior's sacrifice. Eternal life hangs in the balance awaiting the works of men.

This progress toward eternal life is a matter of achieving perfection. Living all the commandments guarantees total forgiveness of sins and assures one of exaltation through that perfection which comes by complying with the formula



the Lord gave us. In his Sermon on the Mount he made the command to all men: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48.) Being perfect means to triumph over sin. This is a mandate from the Lord. He is just and wise and kind. He would never require anything from his children which was not for their benefit and which was not attainable. Perfection therefore is an achievable goal.

The Savior voiced the same instruction to his Nephite leaders when he told them the requirements of the gospel: to be like himself. (3 Ne. 12:48.) The Savior had lived the commands of his gospel; now it was required of all men to likewise live the commandments. Nephi quoted the Savior along the same line:

And also, the voice of the Son came unto me, saying: He that is baptized in my name, to him will the Father give the Holy Ghost, like unto me; wherefore, follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do. (2 Ne. 31:12.)

The Lord amplified his statement somewhat to the Nephites when, after long dissertations on growing perfect through living the gospel, he asked his disciples the pertinent question: "Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be?" He may have been merely trying to impress them further with the truth and reinforce it, or he may have been asking in order to note how well they had been grasping the vital truths he was teaching them. He did not wait for their response, but followed the question quickly with the answer: "Verily I say unto you, even as I am." (3 Ne. 27:27.)

Perfection really comes through overcoming. The Lord revealed through John: "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." (Rev. 3:21.)

It seems that evil is always about us. It has been specu-



must be alert constantly. We catalogue our weaknesses and move in against them to overcome them. Christ became perfect through overcoming. Only as we overcome shall we become perfect and move toward godhood. As I have indicated previously, the time to do this is now, in mortality.

Someone once said: "A fellow who is planning to reform is one step behind. He ought to quit planning and get on with the job. Today is the day." Certainly self-mastery is a continuous program — a journey, not a single start. Men do not suddenly become righteous any more than a tiny acorn suddenly becomes an oak. Advancement to perfection can nevertheless be rapid if one resolutely strides toward the goal.

### *Perspective Is Important*

In the march to perfection through the conquering of sin, it is important to have the right perspective. For example, some people get means and ends reversed. Many feel that the Word of Wisdom is for the principal purpose of increasing our health, increasing our mortal life, but a more careful study of the revelation (D&C 89) reveals that there is a deeper purpose. Of course, total observance will strengthen one's body, make it survive longer so that there will be a longer time in which to perfect the body and, especially, the spirit — looking toward eternal status and eternal joys. The Lord made solemn promises to "... all Saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in *obedience to the commandments . . .*" (D&C 89:18. Italics added.) Here the commitments of the Lord were two-fold. First, he promised to such who obey that they shall "... receive health in their navel and marrow to their bones . . .," that as a consequence of good health physically they "shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint." This is a glorious promise.

But the spiritual promises greatly exceed the physical. For those who observe these particular instructions and are obedient to all the Lord's commandments, the blessings



do the right things to earn their exaltation. To such people as this, the words of Lehi might well apply:

O that ye would awake; awake from a deep sleep, yea, even from the sleep of hell, and shake off the awful chains by which ye are bound, which are the chains which bind the children of men, that they are carried away captive down to the eternal gulf of misery and woe. (2 Ne. 1:13.)

The third chapter of the Book of Revelation contains these words of the Savior:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Rev. 3:20.)

Holman Hunt, the artist, felt inspired to capture this stirring scripture on canvas. One day he was showing his picture of "Christ Knocking at the Door" to a friend when the friend suddenly exclaimed: "There is one thing wrong about your picture."

"What is it?" inquired the artist.

"The door on which Jesus knocks has no handle," replied his friend.

"Ah," responded Mr. Hunt, "that is not a mistake. You see, this is the door to the human heart. It can only be opened from the inside."

And thus it is. Jesus may stand and knock, but each of us decides whether to open. The Spirit is powerless to compel a man to move. The man himself must take the initiative. He must himself desire to repent and take the specific steps. He must, as Paul counseled, "put on the whole armour of God," and thus insure that he is "able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Eph. 6:11.) That armor is incomplete without steadfast effort to live God's commandments. Without such effort repentance too is incomplete. And incomplete repentance never brought complete forgiveness.



When two Latter-day Saints are united together in marriage, promises are made to them concerning their offspring that reach from eternity to eternity. They are promised that they shall have the power and the right to govern and control and administer salvation and exaltation and glory to their offspring, worlds without end. And what offspring they do not have here, undoubtedly there will be opportunities to have them hereafter. What else could man wish? A man and a woman, in the other life, having celestial bodies, free from sickness and disease, glorified and beautified beyond description, standing in the midst of their posterity, governing and controlling them, administering life, exaltation and glory worlds without end.<sup>3</sup>

As you read this, can you conceive of the vastness of the program? Can you begin to comprehend it? Remember this: Exaltation is available only to righteous members of the Church of Jesus Christ; only to those who accept the gospel; only to those who have their endowments in holy temples of God and have been sealed for eternity and who then continue to live righteously throughout their lives. Numerous members of the Church will be disappointed. All will fail of these blessings who fail to live worthy lives, even though the temple ordinances have been done for them.

### *Dangers of Delaying Celestial Marriage* \*

Too often, people think that the decisions on celestial marriage can be postponed and taken care of later. Such thoughts are the tools of Satan. He delights in procrastination and uses it much. If he cannot convince people to ignore these important matters, these ordinances in celestial marriage, he will use the strategy of procrastination on the basis that it will achieve his ends eventually.

But the time to act is now. Any mistake will be a costly one. We must not let attractions of the moment bring disaster for the eternities. All contracts that are not made under the sealing power of the priesthood terminate when one is dead.



*While in this probation and in this life* certainly mean the period of our mortal lives.

Through the scriptures we have a fairly clear picture of the fate of the people of Noah's day who, like many people today, ignored the testimonies of written scripture and of living prophets. Luke records the words of the Savior:

And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:26-27.)

They were drowned in their sins. Their marriages were for time. They reveled in worldliness. They were possibly like many in the world today who place no curb upon their eating, drinking and licentiousness. Their ignoring the laws of God and the warning of the prophets continued until the very day when Noah and his family entered the ark. Then it was too late. Too late! What finality in that phrase! Following their eternal history, we find Peter telling of them more than two millennia later:

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit;

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. (1 Pet. 3:18-20.)

At last, they had a chance in the spirit world to hear the voice of missionaries and prophets again. But so late! What sad words! Nearly a further two millennia passed into history and we hear of them again in modern revelation. Of the vision given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon in 1832, the Prophet writes:

And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial. . . .

. . . They who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they



Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it. (D&C 76:71, 73-74.)

*Too late!* The terrestrial for them! It could have been the celestial, and it could have been exaltation! But they procrastinated the day of their preparation.\* The same lamentable cry of "Too late!" will apply to many of today's Church members who did not heed the warning but who proceeded — sometimes carelessly, sometimes defiantly — to bind themselves through mortality to those who could not or would not prepare for the blessings which were in reserve for them.

The Lord's program is unchangeable. His laws are immutable. They will not be modified. Your opinion or mine does not alter the laws. Many in the world, and even some in the Church, seem to think that eventually the Lord will be merciful and give them the unearned Blessing. But the Lord cannot be merciful at the expense of justice.

### *Make Firm Bride-and-Groom Decisions*

Those young people who chart their course to a marriage in the temple have already established a pattern of thought which will make them amenable to mutual planning with the chosen partner once he or she is found. Even before their marriage is solemnized in the holy place they will be planning their life together, and will continue the process as bride and groom when they sit down to chart their way through a happy, successful and spiritual life to exaltation in the kingdom of God. Now they will drive down some "stakes."

One of the "stakes" the husband drives is that he is going to attend priesthood meeting every week in the year, every year of his life. The two of them drive the "stakes" that they will attend Sunday School and sacrament meeting every Sabbath, taking their babies and the children with them, thus firmly entrenching this as a family program



he had wronged. Thereafter he brought forth fruits meet for repentance.

### *It Can Be Done*

A certain man found that he had a suspicious growth which presaged serious trouble. When the doctor had taken a biopsy and found the growth to be malignant, the man made arrangements at the hospital for radical surgery. When he learned the truth — that his life was hanging in the balance — this good man recoiled at first, then resigned himself, relaxed and smiled as he told the doctor:

“Before I go to the hospital, doctor, I have four items of unfinished business. First, I will check my insurance policies and my titles and see that all are in order; second, I’m going to settle all my financial obligations; third, I’m going to have my will rechecked; and fourth, I’m going to see Bill and apologize for the unkind things I have *said* about him and ask his forgiveness for the grudge I have long carried against him. Then, I am ready to go to the hospital, and to my grave if necessary.”

In the context of the spirit of forgiveness, one good brother asked me, “Yes, that is what ought to be done, but how do you do it? Doesn’t that take a superman?”

“Yes,” I said, “but we are commanded to be supermen. Said the Lord, ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’—(Matt. 5:48.) We are gods in embryo, and the Lord demands perfection of us.”

“Yes, the Christ forgave those who injured him, but he was more than human,” he rejoined.

And my answer was: “But there are many humans who have found it possible to do this divine thing.”

Apparently there are many who, like this good brother, hold the comfortable theory that the forgiving spirit as exemplified in the examples I have quoted is more or less



and meeting all the requirements, but that forgiveness is not granted merely for the asking. There must be works — many works — and an all-out, total surrender, with a great humility and “a broken heart and a contrite spirit.”

It depends upon you whether or not you are forgiven, and when. It could be weeks, it could be years, it could be centuries before that happy day when you have the positive assurance that the Lord has forgiven you. That depends on your humility, your sincerity, your works, your attitudes.

Continue your work with increased zeal and your prayers with increased intensity. Read the book of Enos and “go and do thou likewise.” Read the scriptures which are enclosed and memorize the shorter ones.

### *Function of Church Leaders*

The affairs of the Church of Jesus Christ are administered by the Presidency of the Church and the Twelve Apostles, with numerous other General Authorities assisting, and also through the stake and mission presidents and the bishops. These men are the shepherds of the flock. The Lord has placed these men to lead his kingdom on earth, and upon them he has placed authority and responsibility, each in his particular sphere. He has given these men the Melchizedek Priesthood, which is his own power and authority delegated to men. He recognizes and ratifies the acts of these chosen and anointed servants.

The Lord will forgive the truly repentant. But before the Lord can forgive, the sinner must open his heart to him in full contrition and humility, unburdening himself, for the Lord sees into our very souls. Likewise, to have the forgiveness of the Church there must be an unburdening of the sin to those properly appointed within the Church.

The function of proper Church leaders in the matter of forgiveness is two-fold: (1) to exact proper penalty — for example, to initiate official action in regard to the sinner in cases which warrant either disfellowshipment or excommunication; (2) to waive penalties and extend the hand



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In the Book of Revelation it is written that *he that overcometh* shall "eat of the tree of life," receive "a crown of life," not be hurt of the second death. He shall receive of the "hidden manna," a "white stone," and a "new name," shall have "power over the nations." He shall be clothed in "white raiments," and his name will "not be blotted out." "*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." (Rev. 3:21. Italics added.) How glorious and rich are the promises to those who overcome!

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes?" asked one of the elders in John's vision, and the answer was: "... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple . . ." (Rev. 7:14-15.)

It would seem that these people had not always been perfect. They had had soiled robes and many weaknesses, but had now overcome and had washed the soiled raiment in the blood of the Lamb. They were now clean and purified, as is indicated in the blessings promised.

The Prophet Alma discourses on the mercies of the Lord through the cleansing power wherein repentance has purged sin, and joy leads toward "rest" or exaltation:

Therefore they were called after this holy order [of the high priesthood], and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

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. (Al. 13:11-12.)

This passage indicates an attitude which is basic to the sanctification we should all be seeking, and thus to the repentance which merits forgiveness. It is that the former



transgressor must have reached a "point of no return" to sin wherein there is not merely a renunciation but also a deep abhorrence of the sin — where the sin becomes most distasteful to him and where the desire or urge to sin is cleared out of his life.

Surely this is what is meant, in part at least, by being pure in heart! And when we read in the Sermon on the Mount that the "pure in heart" shall see God, it gives meaning to the Lord's statement, made through the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1832, that presently impure people can perfect themselves and become pure:

Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will. (D&C 88:68.)

Again, in 1833, the Prophet gave assurance that the totally repentant one will see the Lord; and this means forgiveness, for only the pure in heart will see God.

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.)

With such a magnanimous promise, why would anyone hesitate to throw off the evils of his life and come to his Lord?

### *The Buffetings of Satan*

A phrase that occurs several times in modern revelation should certainly be an incentive to prompt, unreserved repentance. This term talks of sinners being delivered to the "buffetings of Satan." For instance, the Lord consigns to the buffetings of Satan those who, having organized themselves "by a bond or everlasting covenant that cannot be broken," subsequently broke that covenant. "And he who