

A Mighty Change of Heart (<http://mightychangeofheart.com>)

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

Chapter 7 – Is There A Way Out?

CHAPTER 7

IS THERE A WAY OUT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He steals your time.

He steals your reputation.

He steals your goods.

He steals your good attitude, and above all

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

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

Wherefore, because that Satan REBELLED AGAINST ME, and sought to destroy the agency of men, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I SHOULD GIVE UNTO HIM MINE OWN POWER: by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of ALL lies, to DECEIVE and to BLIND men, and to lead them captive AT HIS WILL, even AS MANY AS WOULD NOT HEARKEN UNTO MY VOICE. (Moses 4:3-4)

One third of the host of our Heavenly Father’s children made the mistake of rebelling against God. It was the spirit of rebellion that was the big problem. Is that not the number one problem today? We have just witnessed a whole generation of youth in a spirit of rebellion against all constituted authority—parents, government and God. You see, Satan is still hard at work inciting “rebellion”. It tripped up one-third of the host of heaven in our pre-mortal life. It is doing the same today. Anyone who will not hearken unto the VOICE OF THE LORD will be led captive AT THE DEVIL’S WILL. Now let us return to the condemnations and the attitudes that brought them about. A few of them are: UNBELIEF WE HAVE ENOUGH OF GOD’S WORD VANITY SELFISHNESS Have we rebelled against believing God? Have we rebelled about “receiving more of God’s Word”? Have we rebelled against “humility”? Have we rebelled against “imparting of our substance”? Do you begin to see how Satan is continuing his rebellious work? Are we helping him? If you are discouraged it is probably because of rebellious attitudes toward the work of God. LIFTING THE CONDEMNATIONS – CHANGING REBELLIOUS ATTITUDES BELIEF vs UNBELIEF At the risk of over-simplification I want to suggest that the initial step of faith is simply “choosing to believe”. Man was given his agency. He can choose to believe or not to believe. Belief or unbelief is simply a state of mind. It goes something like this. You hear something. The Holy Spirit says, “That’s true.” The unholy spirit says, “Believe it not.” You vote to go one way or another way with a two-thirds majority. The beautiful thing about it is that sometimes when you discover you have been wrong you can call for a recount and change your mind. Listen as Luke tells about the unbelief of Zacharias.

And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw the angel, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. (Nothing destroys belief quite as fast as fear.) But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth; For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God; And he shall go before

the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Luke 1:11-17 – Insp. Vers)

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

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

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

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

Zacharias didn't have much time for a recount. The angel Gabriel expected the message to be believed the first time. Sometimes we have time to change our mind and sometimes we don't. When a person does turn from unbelief to belief a miracle has taken place. Listen as John the Beloved describes this miracle in the calling of Nathanael.

The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was at Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, CAN THERE ANY GOOD THING COME OUT OF NAZARETH? Philip said unto him, Come and see. (John 1:43-46 – Insp. Vers)

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

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

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

Nathanael said unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answering said unto him. Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. (John 1:48-49) (Insp. Vers)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE VANITY ATTITUDE

People become vain over many things. Vanity does not come from the Lord. Some become vain because they belong to the true church. A young lady moved into our town from California. She was in the eighth grade. The first question she was asked was, “Are you a

Mormon?” She had to answer, “No.” She was immediately excluded by those who could help her. She never was accepted because she wasn’t a Mormon. Perhaps these members of the church were just a little vain about their membership. The opportunity to demonstrate the gospel in their lives, to show love and concern, and to share the gospel was lost because of vanity. After all, they were better than she was.

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

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

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

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

*And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings. And YE SHALL OFFER for a sacrifice unto me a **BROKEN HEART AND A CONTRITE SPIRIT**. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with **FIRE AND WITH THE HOLY GHOST** . . . (III Nephi 9:19-20)*

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

*And in the fifty and first year of the reign of the judges there was peace also, save it were the **PRIDE** which began to enter into the church – not into the church of God, but into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God – And they were lifted up in **PRIDE**, even to the persecution of many of their brethren. Now this was a great evil, which did cause the more humble part of the people to suffer great persecutions, and to wade through much affliction. Nevertheless they did **FAST and PRAY OFT**, and did wax stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God. (Helaman 3:33-35)*

SELFISHNESS

Many of the prophets have been asked this question, "What is the greatest need in the world?" Without hesitation they answer, "FAITH IN GOD." Surely no answer could be more profound or timely. The answer has been so in all ages of the world. It requires faith in God to overcome selfishness. It has been said that the attitude of selfishness is the underlying motive of all sin. Lack of faith is also a large contributing factor. A thief steals because of selfishness. Does he have faith in God? No. But what of the substance which we earn by our labors. Why should we impart our substance to others who have not earned them by their labors? Don't they need to OVERCOME SELFISHNESS and to develop FAITH IN GOD, too? There are many events happening on the earth today that would lead us to do just the opposite. Inflation is prostituting the value of currency while a recession is throwing thousands of people out of work. Whatever the government planners do to stem one problem aggravates the other. People are becoming fearful. They don't know where to turn.

The wisdom of the wise seems to have perished completely. If we continue to look toward the government for the solution to these grave problems we will look in vain. Can we expect solutions from government officials whose actions seem to be wholly selfish? Pay increases seem to go through without a hitch. What about the people of this nation? Are they without fault? Absolutely not. Greed and selfishness are rampant in the land. We have millions of people on the welfare rolls, many of whom could work. Many of the wealthy of the nation are on government subsidies, another word for welfare. In short, it seems to be the spirit of the people of this nation to get all they can from whatever source, honorably or dishonorably. Because of ignorance they think the government is the best source. Perhaps we should consider the words of Alma to his son Helaman:

Cry unto GOD for all thy support . . . (Alma 37:36) Counsel with the LORD in all thy doings . . . (Alma 37:37) See that ye LOOK TO GOD AND LIVE . . . (Alma 37:47)

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

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

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

THE FAITH OF A LAD

When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes; but what are they among so many? (John 6:5-9)

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

And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

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

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

FAITH TO LOAN

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

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

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

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

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

What did Simon do? Although tired from fishing all night, probably discouraged from the lack of success, inconvenienced by the Savior's request, he loaned Him his ship. What did the Savior do? After the sermon He demonstrated that He was capable of assisting Simon and his partners in meeting their everyday needs. Fishing was their livelihood, and the Savior rewarded them in that manner. Could it be that GIVING and LENDING are the keys to the KING'S treasury?

THE FAITH OF A WIDOW

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

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

Arise, get thee to Zarepath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarepath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks; and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. (I Kings 17:9-12)

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

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The BARREL OF MEAL SHALL NOT WASTE, neither shall THE CRUSE OF OIL FAIL, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. (I Kings 17:13-14)

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

And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah. (I Kings 17:15-16)

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

And he said, Verily I say unto you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Isreal in the days of Elias (Elijah), when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, (Zarepath) a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. (Luke 4:24-26)

He also reminded them of the fact that Israel was full of lepers, but Naaman the Syrian (another gentile) was the one that was healed. The people of Nazareth were filled with wrath. They cast him out of the synagogue, took him to the brow of a hill and were going to cast him down, headlong. Perhaps this should serve as a solemn warning to those of us who are of the "chosen," or "adopted" seed. If the gentiles can share by faith and be healed by faith, what about the Latter-day saints? THE LORD'S PROMISES Now that we have examined several instances in the Bible that demonstrated unselfishness and the ability to share, let us now turn to the promises that the Lord has given to the unselfish. As we examine the promises let us also examine our own faith in the Lord. In other words, do we believe the promises? Will they work for us? Are they based on principle or happenstance?

To examine the principle of giving and its rewards, perhaps nothing demonstrates it better than farming. Within the past year we have read of the terrible drought conditions of Central Africa. The lack of rain has caused a great famine. People are in desperate need. Hunger, starvation and death stalk the plains. It has been reported that things are so bad that people have eaten the seed that was to be planted the next year.

Every farmer knows that the one thing you cannot eat is the seed for the next season. In the seed lies their faith and hope in the future. If the seed is eaten the possibility of having any kind of a future at all is greatly diminished. What does the farmer do with the seed? He doesn't eat it. He gives it away to the right soil. He plants it as a sacrifice. Does he expect to be rewarded for the sacrifice? Yes, abundantly. If he didn't look forward to the abundant harvest he would not plant it in the first place. He believes there will be an abundant return.

For a kernel of wheat he can expect forty to sixty kernels in return. For a kernel of corn he will expect two hundred to six hundred kernels in return. Should I expect a return for giving, sharing, imparting of my substance and sacrificing? That is like asking if the farmer should plant without expecting a harvest. Of course, we should expect a return—an abundant return that will meet all our needs. The expectation of the return is the manifestation of our faith—the belief that we are literally the children of God and that He cares for each one of us. Listen to Paul the Apostle:

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

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

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, SO LET HIM GIVE: NOT GRUDGINGLY, OR OF NECESSITY: (out of duty) for God loveth a CHEERFUL GIVER. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and MULTIPLY YOUR SEED SOWN, and increase the fruits of your righteousness) Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which CAUSETH THROUGH US THANKSGIVING TO GOD. (II Cor 9:7-11)

Paul makes it very clear. We render obedience by giving. Our attitude is one of **THANKSGIVING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE**. It is not, "I wish I didn't have to give. I worked so hard to earn it. I need it more than the Lord anyway." In the October General Conference 1974, Henry D. Taylor tells of President Marion G. Romney's challenging statement. "If we will DOUBLE OUR FAST OFFERINGS we shall INCREASE OUR PROSPERITY both SPIRITUALLY and TEMPORALLY." (Nov 1974 Ensign p. 14) That is the promise from a servant of the Lord. Do we believe it? If we do, we will double our fast offerings and look forward eagerly to the spiritual and temporal increase. It may not come immediately, but it will come if we believe that it will. Let us do as Paul suggests:

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

Don't get discouraged and quit. It takes several months for corn and wheat to give their increase. The Lord might be a little slow, according to our schedule, but He won't be late if we put our trust in Him and keep PLANTING or GIVING. Perhaps no one ever issued a stronger challenge than Malachi.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In TITHES and OFFERINGS. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and PROVE ME now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. (Mal 3:8-10)

How important is the payment of tithing?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROSPERITY — THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

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

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

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

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

upon the people, that even the HIGH PRIESTS and the TEACHERS were themselves ASTONISHED BEYOND MEASURE. And it came to pass that the work of the Lord did prosper unto the baptizing and uniting to the church of God, many souls, yea, even TENS OF THOUSANDS. (Hel 3:24-26)

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

Now this great loss of the Nephites, and the great slaughter which was among them, WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED had it not been for their wickedness and their abomination which was among them; yea, and it was among those also who PROFESSED TO BELONG TO THE CHURCH OF GOD. And it was because of the PRIDE of their hearts, because of the exceeding RICHES, yea, it was because of their OPPRESSION TO THE POOR, WITHHOLDING their FOOD FROM THE HUNGRY, WITHHOLDING their CLOTHING FROM THE NAKED, and SMITING their HUMBLE BRETHREN upon the cheek, making a MOCK of that WHICH WAS SACRED, DENYING THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY, and of REVELATION, MURDERING, PLUNDERING, LYING, STEALING, COMMITTING ADULTERY, rising up in great CONTENTIONS, and DESERTING AWAY into the land of Nephi, among the Lamanites. And because of this their great WICKEDNESS, and their BOASTINGS in their own strength, they were left in their own strength; therefore THEY DID NOT PROSPER, but were afflicted and smitten, and driven before the Lamanites, until they had LOST POSSESSION of almost all their lands. (Hel 4:11-13)

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

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