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For the Sake of Retaining a Remission of Your Sins

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For the Sake of Retaining a Remission of Your Sins

13

W. Ralph Pew

In his concluding comments during the Second Annual Book of Mormon Symposium, President Jeffrey R. Holland said, “We have an everlastingly rich source of doctrinal ore here to mine, especially in the Book of Mormon, and I encourage all of us to participate in that task” (316). This metaphor implies that we must diligently explore and excavate the scriptural terrain of the Book of Mormon in our search for the doctrinal gems of eternal life and exaltation. King Benjamin’s speech in Mosiah chapters 2 through 5 is a crowning jewel of doctrine and counsel. In that speech, Benjamin prophesies with divine power and conviction concerning the life and mission of Jesus Christ, and he explains how the application of the Atonement brings a remission of sins. His teachings and testimony tie retaining a remission of sins to our caring for the spiritually and temporally poor. He awakens us to this truth by boldly stating the purpose of his sermon:

And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. (Mosiah 4:26)

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The principles, truths, and counsel contained in Benjamin's sermon teach that the Atonement is only as effective in our lives as our daily actions and conduct allow it to be.

If the keystone of all the doctrines of salvation is the Atonement, then the capstone of our earthly probation is our diligent effort to walk guiltless before God through serving others (Mosiah 2:17) and performing good works (D&C 58:26–28). Transforming the natural man into a saint (Mosiah 3:19) is a journey that begins with the cleansing and purifying experience of obtaining an initial remission of sins through faith, repentance, and baptism. Throughout the remainder of that journey we must press forward along the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life. We must receive the endowments of enabling grace as well as provide a determined personal effort. King Benjamin taught that our Creator supports and sustains us from one moment to another (Mosiah 2:21), that he expects us to emulate him by reaching out to serve others, and that by serving we will retain a remission of our sins (Mosiah 4:26). Jesus promises, "You shall receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:20). By pressing forward along the narrow path we bring the abundant blessings of the Atonement into our lives.

To comprehend the critical nature of this post-baptismal journey, we will first review the stated purposes of king Benjamin's address and its doctrinal context. This will help us appreciate his reasons for addressing his people and show us that his listeners had been baptized and had a basic understanding of the principles of repentance, baptism, and forgiveness. We will focus principally on king Benjamin's entreaty that we retain a remission of our sins by caring for the spiritually and temporally poor. We will conclude by examining his admonition that we remain spiritually pure as we endure to the end of our mortal probation.

Having been instructed by an angel (Mosiah 3:2; 4:1; 5:5) and recognizing he was soon to die (Mosiah 2:28), king Benjamin requested that his son Mosiah gather the righteous Nephites at the temple in Zarahemla so he could counsel and

instruct them (Mosiah 2:1). King Benjamin identified two reasons for gathering the people: first, to declare the divine mandate that Mosiah be a king and ruler over the people (Mosiah 2:29, 30); and second, to give unto them the name of Christ (Mosiah 1:11; 5:7–9). In his address he reported on his regal stewardship, he taught of Jesus Christ, and he directed the people to serve their Heavenly King. He also testified of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mosiah 3:1–5, 8). Feeling the tremendous responsibility that accompanied both his ecclesiastical and civil stewardships, king Benjamin additionally declared that one of his reasons for addressing the people was to rid his garments of their blood (Mosiah 2:27–28). For the salvation of his own soul, king Benjamin did not want to be held responsible to God for not teaching his people the plain and precious truths concerning the mission of Jesus Christ and the eternal consequences of sin (Mosiah 2:27, 38–41).

King Benjamin's desires concerning the awesome responsibility of declaring the word of God in truth and soberness to all people parallel those of prophets before and after him. The great prophet Jacob said:

O, my beloved brethren, remember my words. Behold, I take off my garments, and I shake them before you; I pray the God of my salvation that he view me with his all-searching eye; wherefore, ye shall know at the last day, when all men shall be judged of their works, that the God of Israel did witness that I shook your iniquities from my soul, and that I stand with brightness before him, and am rid of your blood. (2 Nephi 9:44; see also Jacob 1:18–19; Mormon 9:35)

The only way king Benjamin could rid himself of the blood and sins of his people was by teaching them the word of God with diligence and exactness and by bearing strong, pure testimony (see Alma 4:19) concerning the doctrines he had learned through prayer, meditation, and revelation. He commanded them not to trifle with his words, but to open their ears to hear and their hearts to understand (Mosiah 2:9; see also D&C 6:12; 133:57; 136:32–33).

Prophets throughout all ages have been instructed by the Lord to teach repentance and baptism. The resurrected Savior carefully declared this mandate during his appearance to the Nephites: “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 Nephi 27:20). To the eleven apostles in Jerusalem the Savior said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt 28:19). Alma taught, “Come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye also may be partakers of the fruit of the tree of life” (Alma 5:62).

King Benjamin understood that the celestial course to eternal life requires baptism. If the gathered multitudes had not been baptized, he surely would have taught a much different sermon by focusing on the fundamentals of faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins. Instead, he elected to teach them that they could retain the remission of sins they had received at baptism if they would diligently care for the spiritual and temporal needs of others.

To place king Benjamin’s address in its proper doctrinal context, we need to remember that the Nephites must have had a fundamental understanding of repentance, baptism, and forgiveness. So it is with us. To comprehend fully the eternal significance of retaining a remission of our sins, we must first understand and appreciate the fundamental truths concerning these principles.

Repentance

The LDS Bible Dictionary provides a clear and precise definition of repentance:

The Greek word of which [repentance] is the translation denotes a change of mind, i.e., a fresh view about God, about oneself, and about the world. Since we are born into conditions of mortality, repentance

comes to mean a turning of the heart and will to God, and a renunciation of sin to which we are naturally inclined. Without this there can be no progress in the things of the soul's salvation, for all accountable persons are stained by sin, and must be cleansed in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. (S.v. "Repentance")

Knowing that sin is a malady afflicting all men, the Savior says: "For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!" (D&C 18:11-13).

Baptism for the Remission of Sins

Baptism is an outward ordinance symbolizing an inward resurrection into spiritual life (see Moses 6:65). During Adam and Eve's time in the Garden of Eden they enjoyed personal communion with God. But as a result of their transgression, Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden and separated from him. This separation is known as spiritual death (Alma 12:16, 32; see also Hel 14:18). Baptism cleanses us from sin, gives us victory over death, provides us with a promise of constant intimate fellowship with God through faith and obedience, and starts the soul on a celestial course toward sanctification.

Forgiveness of Sins

The miracle of forgiveness as declared in the scriptures and lovingly taught by President Spencer W. Kimball brings great joy and peace to us. This infinite miracle is a direct result of the great mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ. The Atonement, when accepted and applied through repentance, sanctifies and purifies us. This propitiation, wherein Jesus Christ voluntarily paid the debt demanded by justice for the

sins of the entire world, is truly the miracle of all miracles. Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught:

Forgiveness, which includes divine pardon and complete remission of sins, is available, on conditions of repentance, for all men except those who have sinned unto death. . . . To accountable persons in the world, remission of sins comes by repentance and baptism of water and of the Spirit. For those who have once been cleansed in this way and who thereafter commit sin—but not unto death—(and all members of the Church are guilty of sin, in either greater or lesser degree) *the law of forgiveness* embraces the following requirements:

- (1) Godly sorrow for sin. . . .
- (2) Abandonment of sin. . . .
- (3) Confession of sin. . . .
- (4) Restitution for sin. . . .
- (5) Obedience to all law. . . .

At what times and under what circumstances do men gain forgiveness of their sins? Manifestly, they attain this reward at any time when they are in complete harmony with the divine will, that is at any time when they have complied with the Lord's law whereunder they are able to become pure and spotless before him. (S.v. "Forgiveness")

Retaining a Remission of Your Sins

King Benjamin's imperatives for retaining a remission of sins logically imply that a remission of sins, once *obtained*, cannot be *retained* without a lifetime of additional effort through charitable conduct. A return to iniquity after an initial remission of sins is analogous to the return of leukemic blood cells after an initial remission of the disease. The *Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics* explains that "leukemia is a malignant disease due to uncontrolled [growth] of leukocyte precursors in blood, bone marrow and [certain bodily] tissues" (1143). But proper treatment can often bring this life-threatening disease into remission, eliminating the cancerous, malignant blood cells.

So it is with spiritual leukemia. The spread of unrighteous behavior in our lives is brought into remission at baptism. Maintaining this state of spiritual well-being requires that we forsake iniquity and embrace righteousness. As diffusion of

leukemic blood cells destroys the body, so sin destroys the soul.

Spiritual leukemia may be correctly characterized as a form of pride. Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said, “Just as meekness is in all our virtues, so pride is in all our sins” (50). The insightful Christian writer C. S. Lewis has commented, “For pride is spiritual cancer: It eats up every possibility of love, or contentment or even common sense” (112). President Ezra Taft Benson has counseled: “Pride is the universal sin, the great vice. . . . Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion” (6–7). The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob admonished: “O that he would rid you from this iniquity and abomination. And, O that ye would listen unto the word of his commands, and let not this pride of your hearts destroy your souls!” (Jacob 2:16).

The insidious encroachment of pride into our lives impairs our desire to impart of our spiritual and temporal substance to those in need, thereby preventing us from retaining a remission of our sins. This spiritual cancer can only be brought into remission and effectively eliminated from our souls through faith, repentance, baptism, and sanctification by the Holy Ghost. In the process of obtaining sanctification, which comes after experiencing spiritual rebirth and a mighty change of heart at baptism, we can keep the diffusion of cancerous pride and sin in remission.

Scriptural references to retaining a remission of sin are found only in Mosiah 4:11–12 and 26, and in Alma 4:13–14. The pivotal nexus between imparting of our substance to those in need and retaining a remission of our sins is found in Mosiah 4:26 and Alma 4:13–14. Living by the teachings contained in these verses will place the saint (see Mosiah 3:19) on a secure course to eternal life.

In Mosiah 4:26, part of king Benjamin’s final address to his people, Benjamin teaches us that to retain a remission of sins we must “impart of [our] substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their

relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.” In Mosiah 4:11–12, king Benjamin implores us to retain a remission of our sins by remembering the greatness of our God, praying daily, and standing steadfast in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Long after king Benjamin’s address, Mormon comments on the concept of retaining a remission of sins in his abridgment of the events of the ninth year of the reign of the judges. In describing Alma’s experience, Mormon indicates that the wickedness of Church members began to lead those who were unbelievers from one iniquity to another, thereby bringing destruction upon the people (Alma 4:11). Then Mormon reports:

Yea, he [Alma] saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted. Now this was a great cause for lamentations among the people, while others were abasing themselves, succoring those who stood in need of their succor, such as imparting their substance to the poor and the needy, feeding the hungry, and suffering all manner of afflictions, for Christ’s sake, who should come according to the spirit of prophecy. (Alma 4:12–13)

In contrast to the wickedness of the time, Mormon identifies the charitable characteristics exemplified by those who had obtained a remission of their sins through baptism and who had continued in faith concerning the coming of Christ. He says they were “looking forward to that day, thus retaining a remission of their sins; being filled with great joy because of the resurrection of the dead, according to the will and power and deliverance of Jesus Christ from the bands of death” (Alma 4:14).

These verses in Mosiah and Alma are the only references in scripture that use any form of the word *retain* in connection with a remission of sins. Although few in number, these three scriptural references testify that retaining a remission of sins is

as vital to spiritual life as retaining a remission of cancerous leukemic blood cells is to physical life.

Although king Benjamin's counsel to retain a remission of sins seems very simple and straightforward, its eternal consequences are of paramount importance. Obtaining an initial remission of sins results from complying with the laws of the preparatory gospel by exercising faith, repenting, and being baptized. But it was never intended that we should linger at the gate of the path that leads to eternal life. Jesus expects us to progress along this path (see 2 Nephi 31:17–20). However, he knows the tender nature of the covenant and that our fledgling steps will be halting and unsure. After all, "He marked the path and led the way" ("How Great the Wisdom and the Love," *Hymns* #195). Indeed, Christ condescended in that he descended below all things so that he could ascend above all things and declare, "I am the way" (John 14:6). His declaration assures us that we need not walk alone, but walk we must. In this context, a restatement of king Benjamin's message could be formulated in these simple terms: retaining a remission of sins depends upon our following the Lord along the strait and narrow way.

If we too follow king Benjamin's plain and precious teachings concerning retaining a remission of sins, we facilitate our progression along the path that leads to sanctification. The purification and sanctification of our souls occurs as we yield our hearts unto God (Hel 3:35). The word most commonly used to describe the actions of people pursuing this path is *charity*, the pure love of Christ that never fails (1 Cor 13:8; Moroni 7:46–47).

A contemporary author, Robert Fulghum, described the following event which took place in Oslo, Norway, on the tenth of December, 1980:

A small, stooped woman in a faded blue sari and worn sandals received an award. From the hand of a king. An award funded from the will of the inventor of dynamite. In a great glittering hall of velvet and gold and crystal. Surrounded by the noble and famous in formal

black and in elegant gowns. The rich, the powerful, the brilliant, the talented of the world in attendance. And there at the center of it all—a little old lady in sari and sandals. Mother Teresa, of India. Servant of the poor and sick and dying. To her, the Nobel Peace Prize.

No shah or president or king or general or scientist or pope; no banker or merchant or cartel or oil company or ayatollah holds the key to as much power as she has. None is as rich. For hers is the invincible weapon against the evils of this earth: the caring heart. And hers are the everlasting riches of this life: the wealth of the compassionate spirit. (190)

I witnessed pure desire of the heart in an experience that occurred in the fall of 1989. On one of the few cool nights in Mesa, Arizona, I attended the annual banquet for the Sunshine Acres Children's Home, a center for abandoned and orphaned children. I sat in the small chapel located in the desert of northeast Mesa and listened to the Home's annual report. Then I watched as several professional and civic leaders in the community were recognized for the volunteer service they had rendered to this marvelous organization. As I traveled home that evening, my mind was full of king Benjamin's speech, and my heart was swollen by the influence of the Spirit. I contemplated the power of pure and selfless service, not that of the volunteer professionals I had just seen being recognized, but that of Vera Dingman, the Home's founder. Mrs. Dingman and her late husband, Jim, created Sunshine Acres in 1954. Since Jim's death, she has directed the nurturing of over 900 children who would have otherwise had little chance for success in this life. Vera Dingman imparts her spiritual substance to others, a substance which she derives from a source within the pure love of Christ. Imparting of our substance to those in need is a precept that should permeate all religions. It emanates from the Spirit of Christ which is given to all who come into this world (see Moroni 7:16).

An example of Christlike service from within the Church is found in the life of a friend, a mother of four. This young woman, temporarily raising her family alone, personally cares for the physical needs of a couple whom she has been assigned

to visit teach. She feeds them, helps to clean their house, and does many other chores associated with the daily life of the couple. She also provides transportation for a handicapped member of her ward so that traveling to and from Church meetings will not be a burden. Her financial contributions truly represent the "widow's mite." Her attitude of giving can best be characterized by her comment concerning the new local unit budget program: "I still need to finish paying this year's budget amounts before the new program becomes effective." Her obedient spirit and cooperative attitude make her the topic of discussion anytime the need arises for a dependable individual to fill an assignment. Her heart is full of the desire to do good as she imparts of her temporal and spiritual substance.

Nephi taught that temporal and spiritual acts of service are necessary to remain on the path that leads to life:

And now, my beloved brethren, after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. (2 Nephi 31:19-20)

King Benjamin's vital directive to retain a remission of sins by remaining faithful after baptism and continuing in the path of service to others confirms Nephi's teachings.

Addressing the welfare session of general conference in October of 1980, President Marion G. Romney quoted Mosiah 4:26 and queried:

Is there any question, brothers and sisters, about our obligation in this program? Is there any doubt that retaining a remission of sins depends upon our caring for one another? If we believe these teachings, if we profess to follow the Savior and his prophets, if we want to be true to our covenants and have the Spirit of the Lord in our lives, then we must do the things that the Savior said and did. He it was who said: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also" (John 14:12). ("Welfare Services: The Savior's Program" 92)

Providing for others both spiritually and physically necessarily requires that we have “substance” to share. President Romney taught: “How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak” (“The Celestial Nature of Self-Reliance” 93).

Caring for the Poor—A Covenant Obligation

Paul taught that inheritance of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant was not determined by genealogical descent (see Rom 9:6), but by acceptance and faithful adherence to the covenant of baptism (see Gal 3:27–29). That the baptismal covenant includes the obligation to minister to others is apparent from Alma’s instruction to the conscientious followers of Christ at the waters of Mormon: “And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, . . . what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord?” (Mosiah 18:8–10). James reminded meridian Church members that part of pure religion was a continuing ministry “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (James 1:27). In this dispensation the Lord counseled Frederick G. Williams through the Prophet Joseph to “succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (D&C 81:5).

In a parable concerning the Final Judgment, Jesus clearly identifies the importance of administering relief to those in need:

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye

clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matt 25:35–40)

Failure to care for the poor according to the baptismal covenant is spiritually fatal; we lose remission of sins and forfeit our victory over spiritual death. A spiritual autopsy in this case would reveal the cause of death to be an uncontrolled diffusion of carcinogenic pride and selfishness (see Prov 3:27; Ezek 16:49; Alma 5:28). Moroni warns that pride is hazardous to our spiritual health and will prevent us from imparting of our substance to those in need:

And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. O ye pollutions, ye hypocrites, ye teachers, who sell yourselves for that which will canker, why have ye polluted the holy church of God? Why are ye ashamed to take upon you the name of Christ? Why do ye not think that greater is the value of an endless happiness than that misery which never dies—because of the praise of the world? Why do ye adorn yourselves with that which hath no life, and yet suffer the hungry, and the needy, and the naked, and the sick and the afflicted to pass by you, and notice them not? (Mormon 8:36–39)

Caring for the temporal needs of the poor is not sufficient by itself. All things are spiritual unto the Lord, and at no time has he given us a temporal law (D&C 29:34). President Joseph F. Smith said: “You must continue to bear in mind that the temporal and the spiritual are blended. They are not separate. One cannot be carried on without the other, so long as we are here in mortality” (208).

King Benjamin also taught us to impart our *spiritual* substance to those in need. Before we can share of our spiritual substance with others, we must first become spiritually self-reliant and build a spiritual reservoir of strength within our own souls. Elder Dallin H. Oaks has said:

We seek spirituality through faith, repentance, and baptism; through forgiveness of one another; through fasting and prayer; through righteous desires and pure thoughts and actions. We seek spirituality through service to our fellowmen; through worship; through feasting on the word of God, in the scriptures and in the teachings of the living prophets. We attain spirituality through making and keeping covenants with the Lord, through conscientiously trying to keep all the commandments of God. Spirituality is not acquired suddenly. It is the consequence of a succession of right choices. It is the harvest of a righteous life. (144)

Developing a source of spiritual strength within our own hearts and souls will lead us to meet with compassion the spiritual and temporal needs of those around us. The Prophet Joseph Smith, addressing the Nauvoo Relief Society on 9 June 1842, said, “The nearer we get to our heavenly Father the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls to take them upon our shoulders and cast their sins behind our back” (Ehat and Cook 123).

In Mine Own Way

Administering relief to others must be accomplished in the Lord’s way. King Benjamin said, “See that these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (Mosiah 4:27). Through modern-day revelation the Lord has established a program to provide for his Saints (D&C 104:15):

But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low. For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made,

and impart not his portion, according the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment. (D&C 104:16–18)

President Romney has taught that present-day Church programs provide the Lord's way for assisting others:

Full implementation of the united order must, according to the revelation, await the redemption of Zion (D&C 104:34). In the meantime—while we are being more perfectly taught and are gaining experience—we should be strictly living the principles of the united order insofar as they are embodied in present Church requirements, such as tithing, fast offerings, welfare projects, storehouses, and other principles and practices. Through these programs we should, as individuals, implement in our own lives the basis of the united order. (“The Purpose of Church Welfare Services” 94–95)

How does living these principles exalt the poor and humble the rich so this great work can be accomplished in the Lord's own way? President Marion G. Romney provides a clear answer to this question:

In the process both are sanctified. The poor, released from the bondage and humiliating limitations of poverty, are enabled as free men to rise to their full potential, both temporally and spiritually. The rich, by consecration and by imparting of their surplus for the benefit of the poor, not by constraint, but willingly as an act of free will, evidence that charity for their fellowmen characterized by Mormon as “the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:47). In this way, they qualify to “become the sons of God” (Moroni 7:48). (“The Purpose of Church Welfare Services” 94)

Paying an abundant fast offering is one way of assisting others. One of President Kimball's statements at the April 1974 welfare session of general conference describes the attitude we should have when we impart of our substance through fast offerings:

Sometimes we have been a bit penurious and figured that we had for breakfast one egg and that costs so many cents and then we give that to the Lord. I think that when we are affluent, as many of us are, that we ought to be very, very generous.

...I think we should be very generous and give, instead of the amount we saved by our two meals of fasting, perhaps much, much

more—ten times more where we are in a position to do it. I know there are some who couldn't. (184)

Does rendering charitable service in the Lord's way to those who stand in need require that we limit our assistance only to those of the Church? The answer is clearly no. Our willingness to share with others should extend to all our Father's children. In restating the history of the Nephites during the first five years of the reign of judges, Mormon said:

And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; and they did not set their hearts upon riches; therefore they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need. (Alma 1:30)

In the April 1989 general conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley spoke of the assistance that was given by Church members to the suffering people in Africa:

As we look across the broad spectrum of humanity at the masses who walk in hunger and poverty and in whose lives are the constant afflictions of disease or misery, let us be generous with our substance to assist. We did a significant thing back in 1985 when we held two special fast days. In a great outpouring of love, our people contributed on those two days more than ten and one-half million dollars to help bridge the gap between life and death for uncounted starving and underprivileged people. The Church continues to have a program, a Hunger Fund, to which we may contribute with love-filled hearts to assist those not of our faith who are in misery in many parts of the world. (66)

In imparting of our substance to those who stand in need and in administering to their relief, we must always keep in mind that to do so in the Lord's way requires that we give to the poor with a pure heart, a good conscience, faith unfeigned (1 Tim 1:5), and with an eye single to the glory of God (D&C 88:67).

Endure to the End

Although we sometimes sporadically try to do the things which the Lord has commanded, we must strive consistently to perform good works until the end of our mortal probation. The scriptures teach the importance of enduring to the end with great clarity. While teaching the Nephites, the resurrected Savior said:

And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father. (3 Nephi 27:16-17)

The natural man or woman thinks of enduring to the end as simply withstanding the march of time, or just “hanging in there.” This attitude is not enough. *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines the word *endure* as “to continue in the same state.” Therefore, enduring to the end requires that we continue in the state that we acquired when we came forth out of the waters of baptism with our sin-stained souls purged through the baptism of fire and the reception of the Holy Ghost. At that moment our lives were cleansed before the Lord, our hearts were purified, and we embarked upon a course of obtaining sanctification through righteous conduct. We must therefore consider the phrase *endure to the end* to mean more than passively marking days off the calendar of our earthly probation; we must endure by persisting in the state of cleanliness and purity obtained at the time of our baptism. We must retain a remission of our sins.

The scriptures are replete with examples of how we are to endure to the end. The adverbs used in the scriptures to describe the nature and quality of our enduring include enduring “well” (D&C 121:8), enduring “in faith” (D&C 20:25; 63:20; 101:35), enduring valiantly (D&C 121:29), enduring happily (James

5:11), enduring with our “whole souls” (Omni 1:26), enduring worthily (Mormon 9:29), enduring patiently (2 Thes 1:4; Heb 6:15; D&C 24:8), and enduring “as a good soldier” (2 Tim 2:3). To obtain the ultimate gift of Christ, the blessing of eternal life wrought through the cleansing power of forgiveness, we must endure to the end by following “the example of the Son of the living God” (2 Nephi 31:16).

The indescribable blessings of eternal life come to those who, through faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins, endure to the end and are cleansed of all unrighteousness (see Alma 7:14). However, our repentance and good works are subordinate to the grace of God. All of our good works will never be sufficient to bring us back into the presence of the Father without the application of divine mercy through the Atonement.

King Benjamin’s concluding admonition to his people is to “be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in good works” (Mosiah 5:15). So it is with us in these latter days. Our faith in Jesus Christ must be steadfast and immovable. With a pure heart we should impart of our substance, both spiritual and temporal, to those in need. By so doing we will preserve and retain the remission of sins we received at baptism, and we will obtain forgiveness for sins we commit as we faithfully, though less than perfectly, endure to the end.

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