

Section Six

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205. The Wonderful Plan of Salvation

Oh, the greatness of our God! Because of His great love for us our Heavenly Father prepared a plan for us to become more like Him. That plan provided us with agency to choose and required that we leave His presence for a time to prove ourselves faithful in all things. Father in Heaven knew that we would all make mistakes, so He prepared for a Savior to atone for our sins and make it possible to become clean and worthy to enter back into his presence. That plan provided a way to obtain physical bodies so we could learn, grow and experience the joys and sorrows of earth life. Heavenly Father gave us His gospel and provided a wonderful way for each and every one of His children to hear and understand that gospel, then choose whether or not to follow it, either in this life or in our post mortal existence. He provided a simple path of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance of sin, baptism, and covenants of priesthood, marriage and an endowment of knowledge to give us the tools necessary to become like Him. He also provided a marvelous gift, even a member of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost, to be with us, to warn us, guide us and teach us what we need to know to be successful and to return home. He has given us prophets, scriptures, and families to be with and strengthen us. **The Savior has shown us the way to follow Him and walk along the marvelous path that will lead us through this sojourn of life back to our heavenly home with our kind and loving Parents in Heaven.**

206. This Is My Work and My Glory

In one very short verse our Heavenly Father teaches us what His great work is: **“For behold, this is my work and my glory- to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39).** His work and glory is to teach us how to become more like Him and to someday return back to His presence. When we lived with God in the premortal existence He already had a glorified and resurrected body. He already possessed all knowledge and power. He already knew all eternal laws and obeyed them. His glory and work is to help us attain eternal life! As mortals we fall far short of perfection but line upon line and precept upon precept He wants us to learn the lessons of life. He wants us to learn to prize the good and forsake evil. He wants us to love and serve one another and partake in the ordinances of exaltation. He has organized us as families so that we can help one another along the way. He wants us to see our brothers and sisters here on the earth as He sees them. He desires that we learn to live the gospel with all of our hearts and learn to love God with all of our heart, might, mind and strength. Truly: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”(I Cor 2:9). **Ours is a divine and glorious future as we walk along the path that leads to immortality but even more than that, to the prized gift of eternal life, “And if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.” (D&C 14:7).**

207. The Three Pillars of Eternity

Elder Bruce R. McConkie outlined the greatest events that have occurred in all eternity. **He described the three pillars of eternity, preeminent and transcendent above all others which are: First, the Creation, second, the Fall and third, the Atonement.** He taught that these are the three foundations upon which all things rest. If there had been no creation we would not be, neither the earth nor any form of life upon its face. If there had been no fall there would not be a mortal probation. If there had been no atonement of Christ, all things would be lost. Mormon taught, "Behold he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man." (Mormon 9:12). Jacob taught a similar message in 2 Nephi 9:6-7. "For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfill the merciful plan of the Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord. Wherefore it must needs be an infinite atonement." **Oh, the greatness of our God who has given us all things that are expedient to someday return gloriously to His presence!**

208. Heavenly Father Wants to Save Every One of His Children

President J. Reuben Clark, a former member of the First Presidency said: **"I believe that our Heavenly Father wants to save every one of His children,...that in His justice and mercy He will give us the maximum reward for our acts, give us all that he can give, and in the reverse, I believe that He will impose upon us the minimum penalty which it is possible for Him to impose."** In the marvelous Sermon on the Mount the Savior taught: "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:9-11). There are two components to consider as we receive gifts from our Father in Heaven: First is to ask according to His will, and Second, to live worthy of that desired blessing. **Our Father is so full of love that we cannot begin to comprehend it.** May we open our spiritual eyes to understand His will and act in faith to draw us ever nearer to Him, that thereby He can give us all that He desires for us to attain.

209. My Child, My Child

There was once a young couple in our ward, Carl and Andrea, who were expecting their first child and were so happy. As the pregnancy evolved it became apparent that a major problem was developing. One of the vital organs was not present and in all likelihood the pregnancy would not come to a completion. We fasted as a ward family and held a special prayer at the conclusion of the fast. With many unknowns, some ward members asked what we should pray for. We jointly felt that we should pray for the Lord's will to be done, but if it were possible for this young baby to be born alive; that would be our request. As time passed the organ did not develop, but Andrea was able to deliver a beautiful daughter that lived for a few hours and then passed on to eternity. I visited this young couple at the hospital and later in their home. I asked them in their home if it had been a bitter-sweet experience? They replied that it had not been bitter at all. **During those few hours of that young baby's life they had felt the presence of a glorious being who illuminated their souls with tremendous love and understanding that was beyond their comprehension. Through revelation we understand that those taken in infancy are too pure to remain in this life and will be heirs of exaltation.** May we live worthy to someday dwell in their presence. (This song is dedicated to Carl, Andrea, and all who have lost little ones).

My Child, My Child

My child, my child, my precious little one,
Your spirit shines bright as the sun.
A gift from God, above, a symbol of His love,
His everlasting arms of love.

How great the plan that we may come to earth,
That miracle that we call birth;
Then back to God we'll go, to live with Him again,
The Savior's love brings life again.

How great that day when we shall one day meet,
And humbly there we'll kiss His feet.
The love of God will guide us to our heav'nly home,
His love will guide us safely home.

Chorus:

Your spirit soars through blazing light,
Your eyes, they see through darkest night.
Your spirit pure shows us the way,
To be with you someday we pray. RTS.

210. Birth and Birth

As we view the sum of our external existence, mortality is but a very brief portion of that span. We lived before we came to the earth and we will continue to live on after we die. Indeed, death is but a stepping stone, and the passing from this life opens the door to eternity. The importance of mortality is what we do while we are here. **We were sent here, away from the presence of God, to be tried and tested. If we do pass faithfully through this second estate we will have glory added on our heads forever and ever.** An unknown author penned the words to this poem that adds perspective and peace for those who pass through the veil of death.

When God sends forth a tiny soul
To learn the ways of earth,
A mother's love is waiting here--
We call this wonder--- birth.

When God calls home a tired soul
And stills a fleeting breath,
A Father's love is waiting there,
This too is birth---not death.
Author unknown

211. Our First Estate

In his short epistle, Jude teaches of the "Angels which kept not their first estate" (Jude 1:6). In a longer conversation the Lord asked of Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of earth? Declare if thou hast understanding... When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" To the prophet Jeremiah the Lord declared: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jeremiah 1:5). The Apostle John taught: "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Rev. 12:7-9). The apostle Paul taught about fathers of our flesh and The Father of our spirits to whom we should give reverence. (Hebrews 12:9). The disciples of the Savior clearly understood that there was a life before birth as they questioned Him. "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:1-3). If there were no life before birth would the Savior not have clarified it? **We did, indeed, live before we were born on earth and we dwelt in the presence of God. We came to learn and grow and prepare ourselves to someday return back to His presence. That is where we came from to help us understand why we are here on earth.**

212. Three Great Questions

As one contemplates his/her existence and purpose here on earth there are naturally three major questions that arise. The first major question is whether or not there is a God. If one truly considers two major trends of thought which do you think is more logical? That all of the universe just came about randomly from nothing, or that there is a planned organization of the earth and universe with a purpose, guided by a higher power. When one truly considers the precise orbit of the planets, the distance the earth is from the sun to sustain life, and all of the elements, plants, animals, and resources that are available to us, it all points toward a higher power that is interested in us and our development here on the earth. It has been said that God is a great mathematician. There are so many facets to consider, but a very strong logical argument can be made for the existence of God and for a wonderful earth that has been provided for us to enjoy and to care for.

Assuming that one accepts the existence of God, the second great question is: does He have a plan for His children on the earth and was Jesus Christ sent to be our Savior? If we truly are children of God, would it not seem likely that He would have a plan for His children to learn and grow and become more like Him and to someday return to His presence? Knowing that God is Holy it would appear that we would need to become holy to dwell in His presence; and given the fallen state of the world we live in everyone makes mistakes. With a great plan of creation for His children to have a place to dwell and given the circumstances that everyone makes mistakes, it would be logical for a plan to make us clean again and that is found in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. According to that plan each of us will be born and die, and because of Jesus Christ we can live again in an immortal state. Because of Jesus Christ we can again become clean and worthy to return back to the presence of God and dwell in His presence bringing together principles of justice being satisfied by His mercy for us to redeem us from a fallen state.

Continuing on the progression that there truly is a God in heaven and a Savior, even Jesus Christ, the third question would logically be, where can their will be found, and what path should one follow to lead back to their presence? If God indeed does love His children it would seem that He would desire an option for each of His children to return safely to His presence. Given the fact that most people do not even learn about Jesus Christ in this life, how can He be a merciful and just God as well? Throughout history God spoke to prophets who in turn shared His message with the people at large. His message has been declared to many but not all of His children. In His mercy God has provided a way that those of His children who do not hear of His gospel while on the earth will have the opportunity to hear that gospel in the next life and accept or reject it before they are judged. He has also spoken from the heavens so that His authority exists upon the earth to enter into covenants with Him to prepare to return to His presence. Such is the loving plan of a loving Heavenly Father who does not want to lose any of His children, but is long suffering for them and preparing every needful thing for each of His sons and daughters to be successful on their journey throughout mortality.

Tying those three questions together in one points to the hand of God doing all He can to allow His children to someday return to His presence. That is the greatest message in all the world; how to help us find our way back home to Him. It all begins with the understanding that there is a God who created us and a plan for us to grow and to develop. That plan includes a Savior to rescue us from sin and a message to each of His children inviting them to follow the path that leads back to Him. That is the great plan of happiness, mercy, joy, and salvation that is offered to each of His children here upon the earth.

213. Premortal Reflections

Premortal Reflections

There once was a battle at a different time and place
And I know we stood valiant before the Savior's face.
We walked with the Father, in the light of day.
With exactness and honor each command we did obey.
Then why do things seem so different here?
And why does my mind seem unclear?
And why do I seem to question now if I have the strength to endure?

We held sacred callings and our spirits there were pure.
We followed the Savior with a knowledge sweet and sure.
We've left that home eternal to learn to walk by faith
Once again we must discover and choose which path to take.
And then we'll feel as we felt before
And then will our minds become clear
And there will be no question then if we have the strength to endure.

Conclusion:

So now in this field of battle we must prove ourselves once more
And rise again to the stature we knew one time before.
It's time to show our true colors and stand as warriors true
And so with exactness and honor, let's go on now, me and you.

Yes, now is the time of probation my friend,
Let's be faithful to the end.
That we may stand with our loved ones dear
In the presence of our Savior there. RTS.

The battle rages on for the souls of men. Even before we came to earth there was a battle; a battle or war of ideas regarding a great plan of salvation that would bring us here to the earth. In that great battle, our Savior, Jesus the Christ and His followers were victorious. We were among those followers and as a result of that have the wonderful opportunity to come to the earth to gain experience, knowledge, and to make covenants that will prepare us to return to the Father's presence. But the battle is not over. Once again we must choose which path we will follow; the plan of our loving Father in Heaven championed by our Savior, or to follow the enticings of the adversary. We truly are in a battle for the souls of men. Let us rise to the stature that we knew one time before in the premortal realms. May we prove ourselves valiant and worthy through the infinite atoning sacrifice of our Savior, to once again be able to return to the presence of the Father and to dwell in His presence for the eternities.

214. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. In the premortal realms we knew our Father in Heaven and Savior. There was no need for faith in that realm because we had sure knowledge. In this life we are to walk by faith as the apostle Paul instructed: "Knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) Faith begins with desire to believe and grows as we act on that belief. Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge, but as our faith continues to grow through our obedience to God's commandments that faith gradually grows into knowledge. Faith is an action word and must be centered on our Savior in order to have His atoning sacrifice become effective in our lives. Paul spoke of the faith of Noah, Abraham, Sara, Moses, Enoch and others who attained great blessings through faith in the Lord and obedience to His commandments. **Let us begin where we are to help our faith grow and become a great tree leading to eternal life.**

215. None of Us are Perfect- We All Need to Repent

Sometimes we think that repentance is necessary only for those who have committed serious sins. Repentance is a wonderful principle of the gospel, and President Kimball taught that each of us should repent every day. Someone asked President David O. McKay late in his life if he worried about sin in his life. He stated that he did not worry too much about the sins of commission but of omission. Not only are we avoiding wrong choices, but are we doing the right things; of temple work, of service as directed by the Holy Ghost, of writing in our journals and thinking uplifting thoughts at all times. Paul taught that, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). We all need to go through the process of overcoming the natural man, as King Benjamin taught, "and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek and humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father." (Mosiah 3:19). **Let us change our attitude about repenting, and through that turn and face toward God in all things, that we may truly put our lives in accordance with His mind and will.**

216. Being Born of the Water

Jesus taught Nicodemus that a man must be born of the water and of the spirit in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt: 3:5). **We are born of the water through the sacred ordinance of baptism and renew those covenants weekly through the sacrament.** As we are baptized our sins are washed away and we are found clean and worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven. When we are baptized we promise that we will take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him and keep His commandments. We are promised in return that His spirit, the Holy Ghost, will always be with us. Alma taught the converts at the waters of Mormon that as we are baptized we come into the fold of God and are willing to bear one another's burdens that they may be light; to mourn with those that mourn and comfort those that stand in need of comfort and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things and in all places that we may be in, even until death. That is one of the great promises that we make, that we will strive to be disciples and serve and build the kingdom of God throughout our lives. Baptism is the gate to the Celestial Kingdom but it is only the starting point and not the ending point. Renewing those covenants weekly will help us to stay close to the Savior and be worthy to receive His great atoning and cleansing sacrifice as we sojourn here upon the earth. We are indeed born again through baptism and grow from grace to grace that will lead us back to His presence.

217. Come Unto Me

The Savior invited us to “Come unto me” and to “Follow Me” as we strive to enter the Kingdom of God. Nephi counseled us to follow the Savior and to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. After we are baptized we also receive the baptism of fire by receiving the Holy Ghost. Baptism is the gate to the celestial kingdom and the doorway to return back to the presence of the Father. (See 2 Nephi 31: 10-20). This song expresses an invitation to follow the Savior and to “Come unto Him” as He has shown us the way to attain eternal life. (Also see Matt. 11:28-30).

Come Unto Me (Baptismal Song)

Come my child, follow me, and enter into my kingdom,
Yes, enter the water and be baptized, the gate that leads to heav'n.

Come my child, hear my voice, the voice that speaks to the soul.
The Holy Ghost will guide your path, and each day you shall grow.

Come my child, come to me, endure to the end of your journey.
Yes, enter the kingdom and faithful be and you my face shall see.

Chorus:

Be born of the water and spirit, be born with a heart that is pure.
Come enter the gate to my kingdom, Come dwell in my home evermore. RTS

218. The Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is a marvelous gift that Heavenly Father has given to us to help us overcome the pitfalls of life and return triumphantly home. **The Holy Ghost can prompt us, warn us, comfort us in times of sorrow and distress and testify of Christ. He can teach us all things and bring all things to our remembrance and guide us to all truth. What a privilege it is to have a member of the Godhead always with us as we live worthy of its promptings.** The great promise of the sacrament prayer is that His spirit may always be with us. The Holy Ghost may come as the still small voice or impressions or a sudden warning of impending danger. If we listen to and respond to those promptings they will become more frequent and we will be able to listen to and recognize the language of the spirit. There are also many gifts that come through the Holy Ghost: The gifts of tongues, healing, testimony, interpretation of tongues, the gift of faith, miracles, prophecy and knowledge. The Holy Ghost can help us in all of the important choices of life to help us know if we are making the right choice through the burning and warm feeling that will come into our heart as we ask our Heavenly Father if we are doing His will. May we always live worthy to have the Holy Ghost as a constant guide and companion in our lives.

219. Ordinances and Covenants

Just as baptism is the gate to the Celestial Kingdom, the temple ordinances of washing, anointings, endowment, eternal marriage and sealing ordinances provide the gateway to exaltation. Just as one of our main purposes in coming to the earth is to gain a body and experience, our participation in the ordinances and covenants of the gospel is the way we walk along the path that leads to Eternal life. Ordinances such as the sacrament renew covenants of baptism where we covenant to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him and keep the commandments. Heavenly Father in turn promises us that as we keep the covenants that He will bless us and eventually we will gain the prize of Eternal life. Heavenly Father sets the terms of the covenants and it is our opportunity to participate in those covenants and blessings first for ourselves and then for others in vicarious work in the temples. There becomes a welding link between ourselves and our ancestors who have gone on before. **In the ordinances of the gospel the power of godliness becomes manifest as we come to understand the plan of our Heavenly Father and strive to become more like Him. The ordinances help to bless and sanctify us and make us worthy to accept and receive the great blessings of the atonement through the infinite suffering of our Savior on our behalf.** Through the ordinances of the temple we also gain the great privilege of becoming Saviors on mount Zion by doing for others what they cannot do for themselves. As we participate regularly in the ordinances of the gospel it keeps us walking along the covenant path that leads to exaltation.

220. The Two Great Commandments

A certain lawyer asked the Savior: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. 22:36-39). Love is an emotion but love is also a decision. We decide to Love God and follow our Savior. First we may love only our friends and family but as we come to understand love, it grows to include all of our friends and neighbors. The truest love was expressed by the Savior in the garden of Gethsemane and later on the cross. The Savior showed great love when on the cross He said: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) Have you come to a point that you love your enemies? We must hate the sin but love the sinner. If we are to develop true charity we must develop an unconditional love of all men that is expressed at all times and in all places. That is the true test of love. If we love only those we are close to we are as the Pharisees and Publicans. **It is when we learn to love those who have offended us or injured us that our hearts expand to the level of true charity. Charity or Christlike love, is the pinnacle of love in our lives. May we start today to pray and act more Christlike toward those who are not so easy to love, and may we grow in love until it becomes brighter and brighter until the perfect day.**

221. What is Life?

The great questions, “Where did we come from, why are we here, and where are we going?” cause us to reflect on the purpose of our existence here. Life is a teacher, a tester, a refiner, and a rewarder as we strive to come to an understanding of our place in the universe. This song, “What is life?” explores some of those questions and potential answers as we walk arm in arm with each other along the pathway of life.

What is Life?

What is life? Can you find the answer? Who are we and where shall we go?
What’s the treasure we came here to find? Where’s the key and map to help us climb
Upward on our journey here through the trials and tests of life?
Where’s the greatest joy to be found, in the choices we each make.
Life’s a teacher, a tester, a refiner, a rewarder, with sorrow and heartache,
But joy and bliss too. It’s gaining experience, talents and friends
And giving of service and love to all men.
It’s a great opportunity we all enjoy, to live now in the great race of life.

Each man has his set of life’s experience that he’s gained through choices
That he’s made. What’s he putting into life’s great vessel? Will it last
Or slowly fade away? Combinations are limitless. We each are different
In many ways. Still there’s the essence of life to be found. That’s the reason why
We’re here. There are choices around us, yes in all that we do
Between light and darkness and shades of gray too. Yes many directions
And voices that call and put forth their treasures to us one and all.
May we search for the treasure that perisheth not and fulfill our great mission on earth.

Conclusion:

Life, join the great race of life! Begin where you are now. Knock and listen,
Search and find, the answers can be found. Mortality’s veiled in purpose
We cannot understand all, but if we’re faithful one day we’ll see the reason of
Why it’s now so. Yes, the reason of why it’s now so. RTS

222. Follow the Covenant Path

In President Nelson's first news conference after he became the prophet he spoke from the temple and invited all members of the church to follow the covenant path. He stated: "The end for which each of us strives is to be endowed with power in a House of the Lord, sealed as families, faithful to covenants made in the temple that qualify us for the greatest gift of God- that of eternal life. The ordinances of the temple and the covenants you make there are key to strengthening your life, your marriage and your family, and your ability to resist the attacks of the adversary. Your worship in the temple and your service there for your ancestors will bless you with increased personal revelation and peace and will fortify your commitment to stay on the covenant path. **Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere.**" He added that as we keep our covenants, our covenants will keep us safe. What a great promise from a prophet of the Lord! Let us hold to our covenants and receive the great blessings that follow through obedience to those covenants

223. The Covenant Relationship

As we speak of the gospel as being the "Everlasting Covenant" we realize that it is God's promise to us of eternal life and salvation through the ordinances and covenants of the gospel. As we were sent to the earth we recognized that each of us would have weaknesses and challenges to overcome to prepare us to return back to the presence of the Father. In a very insightful message, Robert J. Matthews taught: "The Lord requires certain duties of all members of his Church, but each must also struggle with his own nature and personality. Timid souls must learn to be brave; overzealous natures must develop patience; rebellious persons must learn to conform, the slothful must become diligent; the spiritually uncultured must be refined; and all must learn self-discipline. The covenant relationship encourages us to deal with these personal weaknesses; every gospel covenant ties the individual closer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the power to help us turn weaknesses into strengths" (see Ether 12:27). May we realize that although the gospel covenant contains many general covenants for all members of the church, that the Lord has foreordained each of us to accomplish our own personal missions to help build the kingdom here upon the earth. Let us do all within our power to accomplish our individual missions, knowing that with the Lord's help we can accomplish all things whatsoever he commands us

224. Obedience Is the First Law of Heaven

Obedience truly is the first law of heaven. "There is a law irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of the world upon which all blessings are predicated. And when we obtain any blessing from God it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated." (D&C 130:20-21). Heavenly Father wants to bless us in any and every way that He can. All we have to do is try to live according to His commandments to the best of our ability. Just as obedience is the first law of heaven, Love is the highest law in that first law of obedience. If we strive to live those laws of loving our Father in Heaven and loving our neighbor as ourselves, there would be little need for many of the other laws. We would live in love and seek the interest of our neighbor in each face that we meet and in each circumstance. As we strive to serve God with all our hearts, might, mind and strength it becomes easier to keep His commandments, for we know that His commandments are given to us for our benefit and the key to true happiness and joy.

225. Get Thee Hence Satan

When Moses communed with God on the mount, as recorded in Moses chapter one, he learned a great lesson: That we do have power over Satan. After the presence of God had withdrawn from Moses: "Behold, Satan came tempting him saying: Moses, son of man, worship me. (Moses 1:12). After a brief dialogue Moses uttered these powerful words: "Get thee hence, Satan; deceive me not." (Moses 1:16) Later as Satan continued to tempt him Moses declared with authority: "In the name of the Only Begotten, depart hence, Satan." (Moses 1:21). James taught a similar powerful lesson in his epistle: "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you." (James 4:5) We do indeed have power over Satan through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Always remember that the power of God is greater than the power of the adversary and in the end righteousness will indeed triumph. When you are faced with trials, temptations, loneliness or grief, turn to the Savior and He will succor you. Remember the teachings of the apostle Paul: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor 10:13). In your moment of trial or temptation look to the Savior in faith and you will be delivered; and you will indeed, see the hand of God in your life.

226. Lies of Satan

Years ago a good bishop taught the young men of the ward to avoid temptations. He taught that there are three great lies that Satan uses to tempt us. He said lie number one is, "No one will ever know." He followed that with lie number two, "Just once won't hurt. It won't hurt to take one drink of alcohol or smoke a cigarette or commit an immoral act." Just remember if you never commit a sin the first time you don't have to worry about repeating it. The third lie of Satan that he taught was, "Everyone else is doing it." He taught that Satan wants us to lower our guard little by little so that we become desensitized like the frog in the pot of water that starts out warm and before the frog knew it was too late and he was boiled. To those three great lies of Satan I would add a fourth, as taught by Nephi. Nephi taught that the devil would say, "I am no devil, for there is none." He would have us think that there is no God and also no devil. If we will take the Holy Spirit, even the Holy Ghost, to be our guide we will be wise and not be entangled by the temptations of the evil one. We need to look to the great light of the Savior and follow in His footsteps, then our lives will be filled with light and we will be able to discern and avoid the temptations of the devil and walk upward through the ordinances and covenants of the gospel toward eternal life.

227. A God Who Weeps

In a remarkable dialogue between the prophet Enoch and his Maker, Enoch observed that: **“The God of Heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept.” Three times Enoch asked. “How is it that thou canst weep?”** Enoch beheld the magnificence of God and marveled at His creations, His mercy, and kindness. Enoch recognized that God had given commandments for men to love one another and to choose God as their Father, but they were without affection and filled with hate. God enlightened Enoch that: **“Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall weep over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore shall not the heavens weep, seeing these shall suffer.”** (see Moses 7:28-37). The Lord then showed Enoch in vision **“All the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and wept and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook.”** (Moses 7:41). Just as God had wept at the wickedness of His children, Enoch also wept when he saw the wickedness of his brethren. The Lord then instructed Enoch to look forward to a future day: **“And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; and his soul rejoiced, saying: the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father, and behold, Zion is with me.”** (Moses 7:47). Looking through the corridors of time Enoch wept as did God at the wickedness of men upon the earth. Enoch showed us the pattern to follow through faith, creating a Zion society that dwelt in righteousness. It is comforting to know that God suffers as we suffer, even as His children, and He longs for us to choose to follow Him. **May our tears of sorrow be swallowed up in joy through the tender mercy and atoning sacrifice of our Savior, that will enable us to also walk with God after we have passed through the travails and trials of this earthly existence home to the presence of our Father who will receive us with open arms and tears of joy and happiness.**

228. No Empty Chairs in Heaven

The sons of Mosiah expressed a great love for their fellowman after their conversion. Of them it was said... **“they could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble.”** (Mos. 28:3). Of course we know that because we have our free agency that some will turn away from the light of the gospel, but we should do all within our power to make sure that there are no empty chairs in heaven on our account. **If we truly knew our stature in the premortal realms we would do all we could from morning to evening to invite all to share in the supper of the Lord.** Because of His infinite love for us, Heavenly Father wants to give to each of us all the glory and blessings that He can and that we are willing to receive. All, except the sons of perdition, will receive some station of glory. Heavenly Father’s work and glory is to bring to pass not only immortality but the greatest gift of eternal life to all who will accept and follow His plan for our eternal progression. President Henry B. Eyring extended a promise that he said a member of the quorum of the Twelve Apostles once made to him. He had explained that, **“Because of choices some in our extended family had made, I doubted that we could be together in the world to come.”** He said, **“as well as I can remember,” ‘You are worrying about the wrong problem. You just live worthy of the celestial kingdom, and the family arrangements will be more wonderful than you can imagine.’** May we do our part and live worthy to inherit the celestial kingdom, and the Lord will take care of the rest of the arrangements.

229. Fruits of the Spirit

We are all familiar with the gifts of the spirit as found in the 7th Article of Faith, Moroni chapter 10, 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and D&C section 46. **But are we aware of the fruits of those gifts as spoken of by Paul to the Galatians? In Galatians 5: 22-23 it teaches us about the fruits of the spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.”** He went on to teach in verse 25, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” If we live according to the promptings of the Holy Ghost we will experience true love, joy, peace and faith according to the fruits of the Spirit. It is that Spirit that leads us to do good continually. The fruits of the Spirit are enjoyed by faithful members of the church as they participate in the blessings of the temple and strive to bless the lives of their fellow man here upon the earth. The gifts and fruits of the spirit bless not only our own lives, but the lives of all those with whom we associate here upon the earth.

230. Testimony and Conversion

It has been said that we know and declare, and we do and become. Having a testimony is important but that alone is insufficient to save us. The evil spirits of the Savior’s day knew and declared that He was the Savior, but that knowledge was not enough to save them. It is in knowing the truth and living it that we gain the spirit of conversion that denotes an acceptance of the will of God and manifesting it through faith, baptism, and the reception of the Holy Ghost. Complete conversion comes through many trials and much testing as we walk by faith here upon the earth. Testimony begins as we come to know of the truthfulness of the gospel. Conversion is the natural process of obedience to gospel principles to a point that we come, even as the people of King Benjamin, to have our hearts changed; that we have no more desire to do evil. There are many people with testimonies who have not been baptized or are not active in the gospel. Testimony is strengthened as we follow the pathway to complete conversion; the process of discipleship comes as we choose to follow the Savior and indeed to do whatever He would have us to do.

231. The Sacrament-Table of Grace

Have you heard of the sacrament table referred to as the “table of grace?” Truly it is a table of grace received from our Lord and Savior. In the blessing on the water we hear: “Bless and sanctify this wine (water) to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them...” Of course the wine symbolizes our Savior treading the winepress alone as all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. In the prayer on the bread we symbolically remember His flesh and promise that we will take upon us His name, keep His commandments and always remember Him. The sacrament is that holy ordinance which allows us to come to the table of the Lord and examine ourselves, recommitting to keep those sacramental covenants. The word grace is an invitation to accept more fully His great atoning sacrifice on our behalf and to strive to become more clean and worthy before Him. **Of course without His atonement we would all be lost forever, but as we accept His great atoning sacrifice, His grace has the power to cleanse us from all sin as we repent and strive to keep the commandments, loving Him with all our heart, might, mind and strength. The next time you partake of the sacrament think of His table of grace, with His blood shed for you and for me, and for all mankind.**

232. I Am a Child of God

One of the great lessons to learn in life is that we are children of God. That knowledge gives us an understanding of who we are, why we are here on earth, and what we may become. It gives us the framework for making each and every decision in life. It leads to a plea on our part for the Lord to lead us, guide us, and walk beside us throughout our lives here on earth. Naomi Ward Randall wrote a wonderful children's song, "I Am a Child of God," that has inspired and strengthened many throughout their lives. It contains a simple yet beautiful message to each of us as sons and daughters of God.

I Am a Child of God

I am a child of God, and he has sent me here,
Has given me an earthly home with parents kind and dear.
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do to live with him someday.

I am a child of God, and so my needs are great;
Help me to understand his words before it grows too late.
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do to live with him someday.

I am a child of God. Rich blessings are in store;
If I but learn to do his will, I'll live with him once more.
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do to live with him someday.

I am a child of God. His promises are sure;
Celestial glory shall be mine if I can but endure.
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me, help me find the way.
Teach me all that I must do to live with him someday. (Naomi Randall)

233. There Is Always a Point of Safe Return

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught a wonderful principle that in the gospel there is **“Always a point of safe return.”** He taught that as a pilot he learned to always measure and that there was a point where he could safely turn back if needed and return to his point of origin. He knew that he would have enough fuel to safely return, but beyond a certain point he was committed to go on or risk facing a crash landing. As it is in aviation, so it is with the Savior. We are never outside of the reach of His infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice for us. We always think we have enough time to change, but we need to take care of business today, for tomorrow may never come. Today is the day to start to do a little better and to make sure that our course is a course leading to eternal life. It is a time to look at the map and if there are course corrections needed, to begin now to make those changes. **The wonderful atonement of the Savior is always available to us and He calls: “Come, follow me.” That is the path of safety and happiness; that is the path that brings joy on our journey home.**

234. As a Child

As the Savior spoke to the Nephites he taught them, “Whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life and have taken it up again.” (3 Nephi 9:22). There are many wonderful Christlike qualities that little children have. It begins with an innocence and purity coupled with an abiding faith that makes one teachable. It denotes kindness and tenderness and no guile or desire to deceive. A child is quick to forgive and assumes a positive perspective of those around him or her. A child is obedient to those in authority and has pure love. A child exhibits a wonderment and fascination for the beauties of nature and a desire to do that which is good. A child loves light and expresses a desire to follow the Savior. A child is honest, just as the children in the “Emperor’s New Clothes.” A child truly believes that all things are possible and does not have the preconceived notions and ideas that limit his or her potential. This song expresses some of the perspectives about becoming as a child to receive the great gift of eternal life.

As a Child

As a child we must be if we hope to find the key;
The key of faith, the key of hope, of love and charity.
Submissive, meek and humble, that’s how our lives should be.
For unless we are as children, we’ll not enter into heaven.

As a pure little child is the greatest found in heav’n,
Then let us cast away our pride, our greed, our worldliness.
Dear Father up in heaven, help us to see the light
And become as little children, there to find eternal life.

And he spake unto the multitude and said unto them: Behold your little ones.
And they looked to behold...And they saw angels descending as it were in the
Midst of fire..and encircled those little ones about... with fire;
And the angels did minister to them. (3rd Nephi 17:23-24). RTS

235. Priesthood Power and Authority

Priesthood authority is conferred upon us at the time of one's ordination, but priesthood power only comes as the result of personal righteousness. Priesthood power is the governing power of the universe. By the power of the Word the earth and universe were created. Priesthood power is shared by women and men; all of the blessings of the priesthood are available to all based on worthiness. Priesthood is the power of God delegated to man on the earth to act in His name and to perform those necessary ordinances to prepare His children to return to His presence. The priesthood is after the Order of the Son of God and power is obtained through righteous living to accomplish the purposes of the Lord. As we are filled with charity in the household of faith, and let virtue garnish our thoughts, our confidence will wax strong in the presence of God; the doctrine of the priesthood will distill upon us the dews of heaven. The Holy Ghost will become our constant companion and our scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth. (See D&C 121:45-46). Priesthood is exercised through faith to perform miracles in accordance with the will of Heavenly Father. Through the ordinances of the priesthood we enter and follow the covenant path that leads us back to His presence to fill the measure of our creation

236. Marriage Is Ordained of God

Marriage and family are ordained of God. The most important decision we will make in this life is who to marry, where to marry and which path we will follow throughout our lives here on the earth. The prophets and scriptures have placed great emphasis on marriage. Paul taught, "Neither is the woman without the man nor the man without the woman in the Lord." (1 Cor.11:11). We are instructed to cleave (to hold) to our spouse and none else as we walk through life. President Hinckley taught that we should be fiercely loyal to our spouse. **"The Family: A Proclamation to the World" teaches that sacred ordinances and covenants in the temple make it possible for families to be together forever. In the temple, as marriages are performed eternal family units are created, for time and all eternity.** Marriage is not always easy. Joined together are two individuals with different backgrounds and upbringing, and there will always be differences of some type in marriage. Marriage is a union of equal partners who have complementary roles to complete each other. Bringing children into the world is an undertaking that takes the best efforts of those involved, and even in the best of circumstances there are times of challenges and disappointment along with periods of joy and fulfillment. **The crowning blessings of eternity are reserved for those who enter into this sacred covenant and who persevere and grow through the good times and the bad, through the bliss and agony that we experience in this life.** Marriage is indeed ordained of God and helps us to grow to become like our Eternal Parents.

237. One Eternal Round

God truly does know the end from the beginning. From the premortal realms in the grand council in heaven our Heavenly Father knew the course that would follow through the course of history and in our individual lives. In our patriarchal blessings we are given glimpses of the possibilities that lie before, and the prophets share with us insights of those events to come. The scriptures are rich in prophecies both about the coming of the Savior and also of His triumphal return at His coming. God has declared that: "All things are present before mine eyes." (Moses 1:6). Just as God called Moses His son on three consecutive occasions, so also He calls us as His sons or daughters. We have all been promised and foreordained to accomplish worthwhile things and our Father in Heaven knows whether or not we will accomplish them, but we still have our agency and choice. That was one of the great gifts of mortality, for us to come and prove to ourselves what we would do in the battle of life. It is comforting to know that our Heavenly Father knows us and knows all things. He will give us every opportunity to grow and learn and provided a wonderful Savior to be our advocate. God be thanked for the matchless gift of His Son.

238. Forever

Have you ever thought about forever? Yes, really thought about it? Some people believe that nothing lasts forever, BUT SOME THINGS DO! We are so tied to the framework of mortality and death that it becomes difficult to comprehend the life beyond and the immortality of our souls. The Lord, speaking to Abraham, taught him a great lesson: "And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon...and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added on their heads forever and ever." (Abraham 3:26). What is that second estate? It is our life here upon the earth to be proved to see if we will do whatsoever the Lord our God will command us. Mortality, in the grand scheme of things, is such a short time, but so much depends on it! And what lasts forever? Families can last forever, Eternal Marriage can last forever, and Eternal Life will last forever for those who qualify for it. This short day of life, our second estate, is given to us to prepare to return to God and to be able to dwell in His presence through the infinite and atoning sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ. When you think about it, do you want to spend your time working on things that will only fade away with time, or do you want to strive for something that will last eternally? That is the great question that each of us must answer for ourselves. That is indeed why we are here to prepare for where we are going. May we each strive to develop eternal marriages and eternal families, and to strive to attain the ultimate goal of eternal life, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God. (D&C 14:7).

239. I Am the Law

As the Savior was ministering to the Nephites He taught them of the law and the light. He taught: "**Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.**" (3 Nephi 15:9). Nephi must have been looking forward to that very hour as he taught the people in his time. "And after Christ shall have risen from the dead he shall show himself unto you, my children, and my beloved brethren; and the words which he shall speak unto you shall be the law that ye shall do." (2nd Nephi 26:1). Isn't it remarkable! Nephi was looking forward to that great event six hundred years before it actually occurred. By looking forward and backward through time we see the corridors of the Lord's voice to His servants, the prophets. Nephi quoted at length from Isaiah as did his brother Jacob. Nephi, Jacob and Isaiah had all seen the Savior and bore powerful testimony of the Lord's life, atonement, suffering and resurrection on our behalf. Truly the Savior is the great Lawgiver and the Light and the Life of the world. Only by coming to that Light and accepting His great atoning sacrifice on our behalf can we experience the great promised blessing, that of eternal life.

240. The Iron Rod

In Lehi's dream he spoke of a rod of iron which extended along the path leading toward Eternal Life. Nephi later learned the interpretation; that the iron rod is the word of God. **The word of God comes to us in many forms; through the scriptures and words of the living prophets as well as the counsel we receive from our local leaders. We should keep our eye on the prophet, for we have been promised that the Lord will never allow His prophet to lead us astray in these last days.** We need to drink daily from the words of the scriptures and pay diligent heed to the messages in our Liahona and other authorized channels. We should attend our sacrament meetings and listen to the words of counsel and advice given to us. We should fill our spiritual reservoirs of righteousness that will allow us to not be deceived by the mists of darkness of the temptations of the adversary. Truly the Iron Rod is the Word of God and it will safely lead us through the trials and struggles of life toward our great goal of Eternal Life in the presence of our Father in Heaven.

241. Lord, How is it Done?

As a young man Enos had been taught by his father about eternal life and the joy of the saints, but the time came that he wanted to truly know for himself about the truth of those teachings. He relates that, "My soul hungered, and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea and when the night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens. And there came a voice unto me saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. And I said: Lord, how is it done? And he said unto me: Because of thy faith in Christ... wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole." (Enos 1: 3-8). After receiving that great message for himself, he thought of his brethren, the Nephites. It is interesting to note that he records, "The voice of the Lord came into my mind again." It denotes a powerful communication and he received additional promises. Having obtained these promises from the Lord his love expanded and he went on to pray for their enemies, the Lamanites. As we ask how the atonement blesses our lives it comes powerfully, once we have exhibited faith and a desire to obtain those blessings. **May we each follow the example of Enos in searching for the welfare of our souls; whether it takes days, weeks, months or years does not matter. What matters is that we continue faithful to the end to receive those remarkable blessings.**

242. Saviors on Mount Zion

How do we become saviors on Mount Zion? President Gordon B. Hinckley explained: "We literally become saviors on Mount Zion. What does that mean? **Just as our Redeemer gave His life as a vicarious sacrifice for all men, and in so doing became our Savior, even so we, in a small measure, when we engage in proxy work in the temple, become as saviors to those on the other side who have no means of advancing unless something is done in their behalf by those on earth.**" Just as the apostle Paul declared: "Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?" (1 Cor, 15:29). And as the great apostle Peter taught: "For for this cause was the gospel preached unto the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:6). These two great works of family history and temple work provide the means for the necessary ordinances to be performed in holy temples for those who were not able to receive the gospel while here on earth. They are able to hear and either accept or reject the gospel in the world of spirits, then have those ordinances performed by us the living, on their behalf, to allow them to progress back to the presence of God.

243. Where Earth and Heaven Meet

Where do earth and heaven meet? They meet in holy temples where persons now living perform sacred ordinance work for those who have passed on but who await the necessary ordinances for them to advance in their eternal journey. For each of us mortality and then immortality is a wondrous progression which leads us back to the presence of our Heavenly Father. A young sister researched an ancestor's name and circumstances and then went to the temple to perform vicarious baptism and confirmation for her to help her progress along her eternal covenant path. She penned these words to express her feelings:

I step into the font.
The warm water gently laps around me.
Sarine and I have not met,
But I know her, I feel her presence.
My mind and heart turn back
To the frustrations, the searching, the waiting,
To the jubilation of discovering.
It was all worth this moment for her.
A hand is raised, a prayer is said,
While she, behind the gate
Where she has been so long,
Still hopes, Still prays, Still waits.
My hands in hands of priesthood authority,
I am buried in the depths.
The water cascades around my face.
Finally, past the gate, She smiles,
And I feel her elation, In this place where
Earth and Heaven meet. Brittny M., 16

244. The Soul

What is the soul? The Lord, speaking to Abraham spoke of premortal souls in these words: **“And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: these I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits,** and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born.” (Abraham 3:23). In the premortal realm we had a soul and dwelt in the form of spirits, spirit children of our Heavenly Father. We then had the great opportunity to come to the earth and become living or mortal souls as was spoken of Adam: **“And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is man’s spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”** (Abraham 5:7) Man is a dual being, made up of body and spirit with contrasting natures competing between the physical and spiritual. The test of life is to see which of our two natures we will follow and develop: The choice between following physical or carnal appetites of the flesh or rise to a higher level to follow the fruits of the spirit. Paul described the fruit of the spirit as: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Galatians 5:23). **Alma, a prophet of the Book of Mormon taught his son of the state of the soul between death and the resurrection: “Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection...And then it shall come to pass that the spirits of those who are righteous are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all care, and sorrow.”** (Alma 40:11-12). **Alma then further instructed his son about the state of the soul at the time of the resurrection: “The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things will be restored to their proper and perfect frame.”** (Alma 40:23). In the Doctrine and Covenants we learn: “And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul.” (D&C 88:15-16). In summary there are four separate states of the soul. 1. The premortal spirit state of the soul; 2. The temporary or mortal state of the body and soul combined while living in mortality; 3. The soul that continues to live after the death of the mortal body in the spirit world; and 4. The redeemed resurrected state of the soul which will live forever in immortality, and if worthy, eternal life.

245. Understanding the Atonement

It is impossible for any of us to fully understand the infinite scope of the atoning sacrifice of our Savior, but hopefully on a personal level we can come to comprehend a portion of what He has done for each of us. Isaiah spoke of the Lord's sufferings in these words: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:4-6).

King Benjamin added his witness in these words: "And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and abominations of his people." (Mos. 3:7). Alma added this insight into the Lord's sufferings: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and...he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." (Alma 7:11-12).

The Savior Himself described His suffering and His completion of the atonement in these words: "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit- and would that I might not drink of the bitter cup, and shrink-Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men." (D&C 19:18-19). The Savior also expressed these tender words regarding His role as our advocate: "Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him-Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life." D&C 45:3-5). **We can experience the cleansing and healing power of the atonement, even on a daily basis, as we strive to repent and become better. Each Sunday as we renew our covenants through partaking of the sacrament, is an opportunity to examine ourselves and turn our hearts ever more focused on the Savior, express gratitude, and commit ourselves to become better disciples, growing from grace to grace, and walking the covenant path.**

246. But By Me

At the tender last supper the Lord gave final teaching and instructions to His beloved disciples. He spoke of the many mansions in the house of His Father and that He would go to prepare a place for them. He also intimated that His atonement would be necessary to enable us to return back home to the presence of God. He said: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, **but by me.**" (John 14:6). Those words instruct us that we must allow our Savior, Jesus Christ, to become our personal Redeemer, redeeming us through His precious blood, spilled for each of us to cleanse us and make it possible for us to dwell in the presence of God. In his final address, given a few short days before his own death, Bruce R. McConkie shared these words. "And now, as pertaining to this perfect atonement, wrought by the shedding of the blood of God...I testify that it took place in Gethsemane and at Golgotha, and as pertaining to Jesus Christ, I testify that he is the Son of the Living God, and was crucified for the sins of the world. He is our Lord, our God, and our King... in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet, and shall wet his feet with my tears. But I shall not know any better than I know now that he is God's Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer and that salvation comes in and through his atoning blood and in no other way. God grant that all of us may walk in the light as God our Father is in the light, so that according to the promises, the blood of Jesus Christ his Son will cleanse us from all sin."

May we each gain our own testimony and witness of our Lord and Savior, then live true and faithful to that testimony to the end of our lives, that we may someday inherit eternal life through the merits, mercy, and redeeming love and redeeming blood of our Savior.

247. The Savior in the Spirit World

As the Savior hung on the cross there were two malefactors one on either side being crucified with him. One of them turning to the Lord said: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:42-43). The word paradise could probably be translated more correctly to the spirit world, but the Savior knew that after He departed mortality He would continue with a vital part of His mission to bring about the atonement and resurrection for all of His spirit brothers and sisters here on the earth. Peter referred to this great work in these words: 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." A few verses later he continued: "For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pet. 3:18-19, 4:6).

In a remarkable vision President Joseph F. Smith related, speaking of souls in the spirit world: "I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world. To declare their redemption from the bands of death...While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful...And the saints rejoiced in their redemption and bowed the knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliver from death and the chains of hell...But his ministry among those who were dead was limited to the brief time between the crucifixion and his resurrection." (D&C:138:15-16,18,23,27).

President Smith went on to teach that the Savior organized the preaching of the gospel to all who had not heard it or who had not accepted it in the flesh in order for each person to hear and either accept or reject the gospel before being judged. "These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (D&C 138:33-34). **How great the Plan of Salvation that provides a way for every one of Heavenly Father's children to be saved if they will accept and follow the Savior, Jesus Christ.**

248. Return Home With Honor

Return Home with Honor

Return home with honor, my daughter, my son.
Return home with honor when your battle's won.
Return home to Father in heaven above.
Return to His presence, to His arms of Love.

Be true to your family, your covenants, your Lord.
Find faith, hope and love as you feast on His word.
Find joy in the journey and light from above.
Be faithful and valiant through faith forged in love.

Return home to loved ones who've gone on before.
Return to the glory you knew once before.
Return home to Father and Mother above.
Return home to heaven, to Their arms of love. RTS.

Returning home with honor is indeed the object, purpose and ultimate goal on our mortal journey. May we live in such a way to bring honor to ourselves, our families, our communities, and to our Lord and Savior as we walk the wonderful pathway of life. We have a Heavenly Father and Heavenly mother who prepared us for eons of time for us to come to the earth and find the way to return triumphantly back to their glorious presence.

249. Endure (Remain Faithful) to the End

When one speaks of the first principles and ordinances of the gospel, one is usually speaking about the principles of faith and repentance and the ordinances of baptism and reception of the Holy Ghost. The companion to these principles and ordinances is enduring or remaining faithful to the end of our lives. Nephi taught: "After ye have repented of your sins, and witnessed unto the Father that ye are willing to keep my commandments, by baptism of water, and have received the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, and can speak with a new tongue, yea, even with the tongue of angels, and after this should deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me. And I heard the voice from the Father, saying: Yea, the words of my Beloved are true and faithful. He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved." (2 Nephi 31:14-16). **May we not only endure, but joyfully remain faithful to the end of our lives, that we may receive the great gift of salvation in the kingdom of God.**

250. Together, Forever Together

Who is there among us that has not experienced the loss of a loved one through death? For some, death comes as a welcome friend after extended suffering and is greeted by nearly all as a blessing. Far too often death comes as an unexpected visitor, taking away those who are so dear to us without warning. **Death can appear to be a tragedy if we look only at the perspective of mortality. The destiny of man reaches far beyond the veil of death. Death comes for those who are prepared as a step forward along the path of becoming more like our Father in Heaven.** We lay down our mortal body but our spirit continues to grow and develop toward greater perfection. We truly miss those who have passed on and we long to be with them again; there is great comfort in knowing that families can be together forever. Those who have passed on have completed their test in mortality. It is for us who remain to live worthy to the end of our lives, that we may experience that great reunion with our loved ones when it becomes our turn to pass through the veil of death. May we take advantage of each day to enjoy relationships with those we hold dear to us. May we walk with honor along the pathway of life that we may indeed be together forever with those loved ones we hold so dear.

Together, Forever Together

How strong are the ties that bind us as families here?
How strong is the love that spans through the passing years?
How deep are the feelings that reach beyond the veil?
How bright are the eyes, the eyes of love?

What memories are held, held deep now within your heart?
What dreams carry on, what hope for the better part?
What vision now lifts you, yes through the veil of tears?
How deep is your love, Eternal love?

How great is the plan that fills us with faith and love?
How great is the joy of knowing our God above?
How great is our Savior, who gave the gift of life?
How great is our thanks, for Eternal life?

Chorus:

Together, forever together, forever together we'll be.
Our hearts turn to loved ones departed, we long for their faces to see.
May we strive to be found worthy, to see our loved ones dear.
And dwell with them forever, in the kingdom of our Father dear. RTS

251. Death Unlocks the Passageway Into Eternity

Certainly one of those events that penetrates to the depths of our soul is the loss of a loved one. We long to be with them and feel their embrace and company. For some death comes suddenly without warning and for others it comes after a long period of pain and suffering. Where is the hand of God in these circumstances? There is the mortal perspective that we see: the loss of companionship and experiences and the pain and suffering of those who have passed on. The eternal perspective is much more enlightening. Even as our birth is a sleep and a forgetting, our death is an awakening and a remembering. As we pass through the veil we are greeted with love and the sweet embrace of those who have gone before. **Many experiences are related of a loved one coming to call someone home. And where is home? Is it here on earth? Here we are but visitors, away from the presence of God but not forgotten by Him. Our true home is with God and our loved ones for eternity.** This mortal span is but a brief moment when compared to eternity; a brief moment to pass through whatever trials we must to be refined and purified, to experience the atonement that we may truly be at one with God. If we had to choose, would we rather spend 100 years and then continue with a frail mortal body to eternity, or die and experience the glorious blessings of the resurrection and life as eternal families in the presence of God? I think we would all choose the Eternal Life that awaits us. As Enos declared, "I soon go to the place of my rest, which is with my Redeemer; for I know that in him I shall rest. And I rejoice in the day when my mortal shall put on immortality, and shall stand before him; then I shall see his face with pleasure, and he will say unto me: Come unto me, ye blessed, there is a place prepared for you in the mansions of my Father, Amen." (Enos 1:27).

252. Our Eternal Home

- Our Eternal Home

Home with God we hope to dwell in our eternal home.
His presence shineth all around and fills all there with peace and love.
Pure knowledge flows and fills each soul with wondrous views of all his creations. His course is one eternal round, He reigneth over all.

Heirs are we of all He hath, His purpose faileth not.
His greatest gift He shares with us, that of eternal life with Him.
There are no words which can describe the majesty and glory of all. Our voices raise this chorus sweet, praise God forevermore.

Praise God in all that He hath done, His glorious plan revealed.
He gave His son that we might live in heav'n with them forevermore.
Be faithful now until the end, then join the heavenly throng.
That we may meet as a family there through all eternity.

(Conclusion)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, praise to His name!
Alleluia, Alleluia, praise Him Forevermore!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia in the highest, Alleluia! RTS

Truly we shouted for joy at the privilege of coming to the earth. We were led by a champion, our Savior Jesus Christ, who came and showed us the way to return to our eternal home. None of us can make it back on our own, but through the marvelous grace and enabling power of the atonement we do have the possibility to return back to the presence of God and our Redeemer. God's love and light fill the immensity of space. May we live in that light and develop that true love or charity which will help us to come to know God and the Christ and be able to dwell in their presence in the eternities.