

The Doctrine of Belonging

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The doctrine of belonging comes down to this for each of us: I am one with Christ in the gospel covenant.

Section I (Dani)

I would like to speak about what I call the doctrine of belonging in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This doctrine has three parts: (1) the role of belonging in gathering the Lord's covenant people, (2) the importance of service and sacrifice in belonging, and (3) the centrality of Jesus Christ to belonging.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in its early beginnings was made up largely of white North American and northern European Saints with a relative handful of Native Americans, African Americans, and Pacific Islanders. Now, eight years away from the 200th anniversary of its founding, the Church has greatly increased in numbers and diversity in North America and even more so in the rest of the world.

As the long-prophesied latter-day gathering of the Lord's covenant people gains momentum, the Church will truly be composed of members from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.¹ This is not a calculated or forced diversity but a naturally occurring phenomenon that we would expect, recognizing that the gospel net gathers from every nation and every people. How blessed we are to see the day that Zion is being established simultaneously on every continent and in our own neighborhoods. As the Prophet Joseph Smith said, the people of God in every age have looked forward with joyful anticipation to this day, and "we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory."²

Having been given this privilege, we cannot permit any racism, tribal prejudice, or other divisions to exist in the latter-day Church of Christ. The Lord commands us, "Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine."³ We should be diligent in rooting prejudice and discrimination out of the Church, out of our homes, and, most of all, out of our hearts. As our Church population grows ever more diverse, our welcome must grow ever more spontaneous and warm. We need one another.⁴

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul declares that all who are baptized into the Church are one in the body of Christ:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ...

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”⁵

Dani’s Thoughts:

Skimming this talk, one could be mistaken in thinking Elder Christofferson is proclaiming, “love and acceptance for all, no strings attached!” That could not be farther from the truth. Let us all be “good and faithful servants” and understand how this aligns with the scriptures.

Elder Christofferson’s first footnote:

“As the long-prophesied latter-day gathering of the Lord’s covenant people gains momentum, the Church will truly be composed of members from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”

The first reference is:

Revelation 5:9

9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

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Revelation 5:9–10. “Kings and Priests”

Revelation 5:9–10 declares that through the worthiness and redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, all people may be redeemed and crowned with glory to reign on the glorified earth as kings and priests. After quoting these verses, Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that temple ordinances anticipate the fulfillment of these blessings: “Before the time when Christ shall reign personally upon the earth, the elect of God among every kindred, ... **having first believed the restored gospel, will go to the temples of God and receive the ordinances of exaltation whereby they qualify to become kings and priests**” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 144). For more information on kings and priests, see the commentary for Revelation 1:5–6.

Exodus 19:5–6

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and **keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people**: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

Belonging to Christ's church means we are choosing to make covenants with the Lord and to receive the ordinances of exaltation. According to the Lord, choosing Him makes us a treasure *above all people*. The entry for peculiar people in the Topical Guide says:

Peculiar People

See also Called of God; Mission of Latter-day Saints; Separation

Some of the verses under Separation include:

Leviticus 20:26

26 And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have **severed** you from other people, that ye should be mine.

Alma 5:57

57 And now I say unto you, all you that are desirous to follow the voice of the good shepherd, **come ye out from the wicked, and be ye separate**, and touch not their unclean things; and behold, their names shall be blotted out, that the names of the wicked shall not be numbered among the names of the righteous, that the word of God may be fulfilled, which saith: The names of the wicked shall not be mingled with the names of my people;

Doctrine and Covenants 133:14

14 **Go ye out from among the nations**, even from Babylon, from the midst of wickedness, which is spiritual Babylon.

Elder William K. Jackson:

“Many of our world’s problems are a direct result of clashes between those of differing ideas and customs arising from their culture. But virtually all conflict and chaos would quickly fade if the world would only accept its original culture, the one we all possessed not so very long ago. This culture dates back to our premortal existence. It was the culture of Adam and Enoch. It was the culture founded on the Savior’s teachings in the meridian of time, and it is available to all women and men once again in our day. It is unique. It is the greatest of all cultures and comes from the great plan of happiness, authored by God and championed by Christ.”

“What a blessing it is to be part of this grand and noble way of life! To be part of this, the greatest of all cultures, will **require change**. The prophets have taught that it is necessary to leave behind anything in our old cultures that is inconsistent with the culture of Christ. But that doesn’t mean we have to leave behind everything. The prophets have also emphasized that we are invited, one and all, to bring our faith and talents and knowledge—all that is good in our lives and our individual cultures—with us and let the Church “add to it” through the message of the gospel.” (October 2020, *The Culture of Christ*)

In summary, those who have separated themselves from the world by making and keeping covenants with the Lord can all be united together in Christ. They can all belong to Christ.

Elder Christofferson's second footnote references *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith, Ch. 15.*:

"[W]e are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory."

Chapter 15 is all about the Prophet Joseph Smith's teachings on Zion. Immediately after the above quote, it says:

"Anyplace where the Saints gather is Zion, which every righteous man will build up for a place of safety for his children."

Then in the next section the literal gathering to New Jerusalem is explained. How does one reconcile both ideas of "building Zion where you are" with establishing Zion, the New Jerusalem in Jackson County, Missouri?

These are not competing ideas. Becoming a Zion people begins with each of us individually. We must purify ourselves first before we can turn outwards and help others. Or as discussed previously, we make and faithfully keep covenants with the Lord in order to separate from the world/wicked. Then as our family and those around us strive to become a Zion people, we are as Pres. Nelson declared: "preparing a people who are able, ready, and worthy to receive the Lord when He comes again, a people who have already chosen Jesus Christ over this fallen world, a people who rejoice in their agency to live the higher, holier laws of Jesus Christ."

I call upon you, my dear brothers and sisters, to **become this righteous people**. Cherish and honor your covenants above all other commitments." (*October 2022, Overcome the World and Find Rest*).

Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith also says:

"If Zion will not **purify** herself, so as to be approved of in all things, in His sight, He will seek another people; for His work will go on until Israel is gathered, and they who will not hear His voice, must expect to feel His wrath. Let me say unto you, seek to **purify yourselves**, and also all the inhabitants of Zion, lest the Lord's anger be kindled to fierceness. **Repent**, repent, is the voice of God to Zion; and strange as it may appear, yet it is true, mankind will persist in self-justification until all their iniquity is exposed, and their character past being redeemed, and that which is treasured up in their hearts be exposed to the gaze of mankind. I say to you (and what I say to you I say to all,) hear the warning voice of God, lest Zion fall, and the Lord swear in His wrath the inhabitants of Zion shall not enter into His rest."

The commentary in the chapter:

*"In the early 1830s, the Saints attempted to lay the foundation of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri, as commanded by the Lord, but were unable to do so because **they were not spiritually prepared.**"*

Just as Elder Christofferson describes in his talk, we must work on separating ourselves from the world and uniting together in Christ **now**. This is our chance to show the Lord we can be that Zion-worthy people.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Micah's Thoughts:

The first quote Elder Christofferson uses is actually from Joseph Smith Jr. Here is the full quote:

"The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory."

It is important to note that this reference dealt entirely with our 10th Article of Faith:

Article 10: *We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.*

President Nelson ("Four Lessons, One Life", 1974):

"Divine law tells us to prepare for that which is yet to come. Today the world is ripening in iniquity, which will destroy civilization as we now know it. The scriptures attest that "the anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth. . . . and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, . . . of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:13–14). "The devil shall have power over his own dominion. And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst" (D&C 1:35–36).

Our duty is to raise up a generation of men and women worthy to receive the coming of the Lord. For he will come—to Jackson County, Missouri, to be sustained as King of Kings—and he will come also to Israel to be hailed as Lord of Lords. Then his millennial reign will be ushered in. You young, strong, and faithful men and women will bear the burden of the kingdom of God upon the earth as these days of destiny come. May God bless you as you prepare for them that you may know the divine creation of the human body you possess, the reality of the spirit, the power of love, and the dependability and incontrovertibility of divine law.

I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is his Church, directed by him through a living prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball, whom I sustain with all of my heart. This I testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

President Nelson ("Teachings of Russell M. Nelson" under the section Jesus Christ, 2000 said/2018 published):

You can read one evening about Jesus's responsibility as "judge" and know that the day will come when each one of us will stand before Him to be judged. Then read of His responsibility as the "millennial Messiah" and what that will mean when He will reign and rule from two world headquarters: from Jerusalem of old and from New Jerusalem in Jackson County. Then He will be "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15). (Louisville Kentucky Temple Dedication, session one, March 19, 2000)

President Nelson (“Overcoming the World”, October 2022 General Conference):

One crucial element of this gathering is preparing a people who are able, ready, and worthy to receive the Lord when He comes again, a people who have ALREADY chosen Jesus Christ over this fallen world, a people who REJOICE in their agency to live the higher, holier laws of Jesus Christ. I call upon you, my dear brothers and sisters, to become this righteous people.

D&C Student Manual Enrichment B

(B-5) Geographical Designations of Zion: Places of Safety

*Places of Safety Ancient Jerusalem, and particularly the temple site of that city, has been referred to as Mount Zion (see 2 Samuel 5:7–9; 1 Kings 8:1; Isaiah 29:7–8), and members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have used the term Zion to identify their own locations (see Talmage, *Articles of Faith*, p. 347), but as used in the Doctrine and Covenants, Zion most often refers either to the people and their condition of purity or to the center place of Zion in the last days—namely, Jackson County, Missouri. Though Zion is foretold in other scriptures (see 3 Nephi 21:22–25; Ether 13:2–12; Moses 7:61–64), only in the Doctrine and Covenants can be found the directives for its establishment, its laws and principles, and its location. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the New Jerusalem would be the first of Zion communities built in preparation for the Millennium. The New Jerusalem will be called “an ‘holy city’ . . . because it is a place of righteousness” (*History of the Church*, 2:254), and it will be located at Independence, Jackson County, Missouri (see D&C 45:66–67; 57:1–3). The New Jerusalem is spoken of as “the center place” (D&C 57:3), or the administrative center, or capital, for all Zion (see Dyer, *Refiner’s Fire*, pp. 99–104; *History of the Church*, 5:212). It is also spoken of as “Mount Zion” (D&C 84:2) and the “mountain of the Lord” (*History of the Church*, 6:319).). From the beginnings laid in the New Jerusalem, the establishment of Zion communities will go forth throughout the world. The stakes of Zion will be the means through which the Zion societies will be prepared and strengthened (see D&C 82:14, 101:21, 133:9). Zion will first grow to include all of North and South America (see *History of the Church*, 6:318–319, 321) and eventually the entire earth (see Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:138)*

In his vision of the future, Enoch saw that great tribulations would make necessary a means of preserving the Lord’s people upon the earth in the last days. That means is to gather the elect in Zion (see Moses 7:61–62). The Doctrine and Covenants declares that in addition to the true “center place,” the stakes of Zion would also be “for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:6). The Prophet Joseph Smith taught the same principle when he said that “without Zion, and a place of deliverance, we must fall; because the time is near when the sun will be darkened, and the moon turn to blood, and the stars fall from heaven, and the earth reel to and fro. Then, if this is the case, and if we are not sanctified and gathered to the places God has appointed, with all our former professions and our great love for the Bible, we must fall; we cannot stand; we cannot be saved; for God will gather out His Saints from the Gentiles, and then comes desolation

and destruction, and none can escape except the pure in heart who are gathered.” (History of the Church, 2:52.) On another occasion, the Prophet gave the following admonition:

“We ought to have the building up of Zion as our greatest object. When wars come, we shall have to flee to Zion. The cry is to make haste. The last revelation says, Ye shall not have time to have gone over the earth, until these things come. . . . “ . . . The time is soon coming when no man will have any peace but in Zion and her stakes. “I saw men hunting the lives of their own sons, and brother murdering brother, women killing their own daughters, and daughters seeking the lives of their mothers. I saw armies arrayed against armies. I saw blood, desolation, fires. The Son of Man has said that the mother shall be against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother. These things are at our doors. They will follow the Saints of God from city to city. Satan will rage, and the spirit of the devil is now enraged. I know not how soon these things will take place; but with a view of them, shall I cry peace? No! I will lift up my voice and testify of them. How long you will have good crops, and the famine be kept off, I do not know; when the fig tree leaves, know then that summer is nigh at hand.” (History of the Church, 3:390–91.)

Bible Dictionary for Zion:

The city of New Jerusalem, to be built in Jackson County, Missouri, is to be called Zion

President Nelson (Overcome the World and Find Rest, Oct 2022)

“But, my dear brothers and sisters, so many wonderful things are ahead. In coming days, we will see the greatest manifestations of the Savior’s power that the world has ever seen. Between now and the time He returns “with power and great glory,”¹ He will bestow countless privileges, blessings, and miracles upon the faithful.”

D&C 69:8. Of What Benefit Are Church Records to Future Generations?

When we consider the great events that lie in the future, we can see why the Saints are encouraged to keep personal histories and journals. The return to Jackson County, the building there of the temple, the return of the ten tribes from the north countries, the council at Adam-ondi-Ahman, the establishment of the kingdom of God, the battle of Armageddon, the return of Christ in glory—think how future generations will treasure firsthand accounts written by Saints who witness these events.

I feel like every time that topic of Zion or building Zion comes up I feel like if I don’t repeat the call, if I don’t stand as a watchman for Zion that not only will I be neglecting or falling short on why I know I was born at this time- but I will also be held accountable. And to live up to my mandate as well as to rid my garments of the blood of this generation, every time Zion does come up declaring the doctrine from the watchtower is going to take place.

If this bores you then I would say you haven’t caught the spirit of Zion.

The next thing Elder Christofferson say is that if we are not one we are not the Lord’s. This is another one of those things that I feel like I have to declare from the rooftops every time I hear it. Racism is evil and it has no part with the children of God- that being said, these scriptures dealing with being one were not speaking of racism but of matters dealing with doctrine and temporal affairs.

Orson Pratt (Journal of Discourses, 17:16)

"And let every man esteem his brother as himself, and practice virtue and holiness before me. And again I say unto you, let every man esteem his brother as himself. For what man among you having twelve sons, and is no respecter of them and they serve him obediently, and he saith unto the one: Be thou clothed in robes and sit thou here; and to the other: Be thou clothed in rags and sit thou there—and looketh upon his sons and saith I am just? Behold, this I have given unto you as a parable, and it is even as I am. I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine."

Perhaps the Saints may think that this has reference to spiritual things alone, and means to be one in doctrine, principle, ordinances, faith, belief, and so on, and that it has no reference whatever to temporal things; but in order to show you that this has reference to temporal as well as to spiritual things, let me quote that which God said a few months after this in another revelation. I have not time to turn to all these revelations, but I will quote them. The Lord says—"Except ye are equal in the bonds (or bands) of earthly things, how can you be made equal in the bonds of heavenly things?" Here was a question put to us: How can you be made equal in the bonds of heavenly things, unless you are equal in the bonds of earthly? Surely enough, we cannot be made equal. If we are unequal in this life, and are not one, can we be entrusted with the true riches, the riches of eternity? I believe I will read to you a small portion of another revelation that was given on stewardships. The Lord commanded certain ones among his Servants to take charge of these revelations when they were in manuscript, before they were published, that they might be printed and sent forth among the people, and he also gave them charge concerning the Book of Mormon, and made them stewards over these revelations and the avails arising from them. And the Lord said—"Wherefore, hearken and hear, for thus saith the Lord unto them, I, the Lord, have appointed them and ordained them to be stewards over the revelations and commandments which I have given unto them, and which I shall hereafter give unto them; and an account of this stewardship will I require of them in the day of judgment; wherefore I have appointed unto them, and this is their business in the Church, to manage them and the concerns thereof, and the benefits thereof, wherefore a commandment give I unto them that they shall not give these things unto the Church, neither unto the world, nevertheless, inasmuch as they receive more than is needful for their necessities and their wants, it shall be given into my storehouse and the benefits shall be consecrated unto the inhabitants of Zion, and unto their generations, inasmuch as they become heirs according to the laws of the kingdom."

Now, you notice here, the Lord did not intend those individuals whom he named to become rich out of the avails of the sale of the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, and other revelations and the literary concerns of his Church, he never intended that they should become rich while others were poor, that was not the order; but inasmuch as they received more than was needful for their support what should they do with it? Should they aggrandize themselves while their poor brethren were destitute? No, not at all; they were to give all the surplus, over and above what was really necessary to support them, into the Lord's storehouse, and it was to be for the benefit of all the people of Zion, not only the living but for their generations after them, inasmuch as they became heirs according to the laws of the kingdom of God.

There was a certain way to become heirs according to the laws of the kingdom of God. Heirs of what? Heirs of the avails arising from the sale of the revelations which all the inhabitants of Zion were to be benefited by. Says one—"But perhaps that was limited to these six individuals who are here named, and did not mean the whole Church." Wait, let us read the next sentence—"Behold, this is what the Lord requires of every man in his stewardship, even as I the Lord have appointed or shall hereafter appoint." From this we learn that all the stewards which the Lord had appointed; and all that he should appoint, in a future time, to stewardships, were to hand over all their surplus—all that was not necessary to feed and clothe them—into the Lord's storehouse. None who belonged to the Church of the living God are exempt from this law. Does that law include us? It includes all who belong to the Church, not one is exempt from it. Have we been doing this, Latter-day Saints, for the last forty-three years, since this revelation was

given? Have we been complying with the order we undertook in the year 1831, to enter into? This old order is not a new order that you talk so much about.

In the year 1831, we commenced emigrating to the western part of the State of Missouri, to a county, quite new then, called Jackson County; most of the land at that time was Government land. When we commenced emigrating there the Lord gave many revelations. The Prophet Joseph went up among some of the earliest to that county, and God gave many revelations contained in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, in relation to how the people should conduct their affairs. Among the revelations then given was the commandment that every man who should come up to that land should lay all things which he possessed before the Bishop of his Church. Another revelation, given before we went up to that land, speaking of a land which the Lord, at some future time, would give us for an inheritance, commanded that we should consecrate all our property into his storehouse. If we had wagons, horses, mules, oxen, cows, sheep, farming utensils, household furniture, gold and silver, jewelry, wearing apparel, it mattered not what it was, the Lord said, in a revelation given in February, 1831, that it should all be laid before the Bishop of his Church, and that it should be consecrated to the Lord's storehouse. This reduced us all on a level. If a man had a million dollars when he gathered up to Jackson County, if he complied with the law, he would be just as rich as the man who had not one farthing. Why? Because he consecrated all he had, and the poor man could not do any more than that, hence all who complied with the law were equally poor or equally rich.

What was the next step after this consecration? In those days we had but one Bishop—his name was Edward Partridge, and he was called by revelation—and the next step after this general consecration, the Lord commanded the Bishop and his two counselors to purchase all the land in Jackson County, and in the counties round about, that could conveniently be got, the general price being one dollar and a quarter an acre. And what next? After purchasing these lands as far as they had the means to do so, every man that had consecrated his property was to receive an inheritance. Now recollect, none except those who consecrated, none who disobeyed that law, were to receive an inheritance or stewardship; but all who consecrated their properties according to this law were to receive their stewardship.”

I don't know where the men of God like Pratt are today, but we desperately need them. It is not racism that is hold back Zion- it is priestcraft, it is preaching the word of God for gain, it is doing everything for gain and not esteeming our brethren as ourselves. In fact, the difference between us is due entirely to work ethic, intelligence and personal thrift thus saith Saints today. If I have to be the last man standing on these principles of truth so be it. It's the Kingdom of God or nothing! And we do not get the Kingdom of God like this.

Section II (Brandon)

A sense of belonging is important to our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Yet it is quite possible that at times each of us might feel that we don't fit in. In discouraging moments, we may feel that we will never measure up to the Lord's high standards or the expectations of others.⁶ We may unwittingly impose expectations on others—or even ourselves—that are not the Lord's expectations. We may communicate in subtle ways that the worth of a soul is based on certain achievements or callings, but these are not the measure of our standing in the Lord's eyes. “The Lord looketh on the heart.”⁷ He cares about our desires and longings and what we are becoming.⁸

Sister Jodi King wrote of her own experience of past years:

“I never felt like I didn’t belong at church until my husband, Cameron, and I began struggling with infertility. The children and families who had typically brought me joy to see at church now started causing me grief and pain.

“I felt barren without a child in my arms or a diaper bag in hand. ...

“The hardest Sunday was our first one in a new ward. Because we didn’t have kids, we were asked if we were newlyweds and when we planned on starting a family. I had gotten pretty good at answering these questions without letting them affect me—I knew they weren’t meant to be hurtful.

“However, on this particular Sunday, answering those questions was especially hard. We had just found out, after being hopeful, that we were—yet again—not pregnant.

“I walked into sacrament meeting feeling downtrodden, and answering those typical ‘get to know you’ questions was hard for me. ...

“But it was Sunday School that truly broke my heart. The lesson—intended to be about the divine role of mothers—quickly shifted gears and became a vent[ing] session. My heart sank and tears silently flowed down my cheeks as I heard women complain about a blessing I would give anything for.

“I bolted out of church. At first, I didn’t want to go back. I didn’t want to experience that feeling of isolation again. But that night, after talking with my husband, we knew we would keep attending church not only because the Lord has asked us to but also because we both knew that the joy that comes from renewing covenants and feeling the Spirit at church surpasses the sadness I felt that day. ...

“In the Church, there are widowed, divorced, and single members; those with family members who have fallen away from the gospel; people with chronic illnesses or financial struggles; members who experience same-sex attraction; members working to overcome addictions or doubts; recent converts; new move-ins; empty-nesters; and the list goes on and on. ...

“The Savior invites us to come unto Him—no matter our circumstances. We come to church to renew our covenants, to increase our faith, to find peace, and to do as He did perfectly in His life—minister to others who feel like they don’t belong.”⁹

Paul explained that the Church and its officers are given by God “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹⁰

It is a sad irony, then, when someone, feeling he or she doesn’t meet the ideal in all aspects of life, concludes that he doesn’t or she doesn’t belong in the very organization designed by God to help us progress toward the ideal.

Let us leave judgment in the Lord’s hands and those He has commissioned and be content to love and treat each other the best we can. Let us ask Him to show us the way, day by day, to

“bring in ... the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind”¹¹—that is, everyone—to the great feast of the Lord.

Brandon’s Thoughts:

Growing up I never felt like I belonged in my priest Quorum. Those feelings of not fitting in have persisted to a lesser extent as an adult. I never seem to fully relate to others, and I’ve often found the social aspect of church difficult. Luckily for me these things have never impacted my testimony or desire to keep the commandments. This talk resonates with me because we are all here for the same reason, to build Zion and become perfected in Christ. Today I’m going to focus in on the topic of what it means to be perfect, or maybe a better way of saying it is to “become” perfect that we may eventually belong to God forever and dwell with Him in glory.

The account Elder Christofferson provided from Sister Jodi King is a good example of someone feeling like they didn’t belong among the saints, but she belongs to be in Zion as much as I do. It seems incredibly important, if we are truly to become heirs in Zion, to help those who are struggling to feel like they belong.

I feel I would be remiss in my gratitude toward the Savior and his judges in Israel if I didn’t mention my relationship with my current bishop who really went out of his way to help me feel as though I belonged. I was going through a hard time in my life about three years ago and I just needed help. I turned to my bishop for guidance and what I found was not only guidance and the presence of the Holy Ghost, but a friend. He made it easy to feel like I belonged in my ward. There have been mornings where I didn’t want to get up and go to church but I didn’t want to disappoint the Lord or my bishop, so I got up anyway. I know whenever I go to church there is someone who truly knows me and loves me. Everyone in life at some point will go through a hard time. The key is for the rest of us to know how to be true disciples of Christ and lift them up as needed. We need to not let our brothers and sisters fall to the wayside. Elder Christofferson quoted, “The Savior invites us to come unto Him—no matter our circumstances. We come to church to renew our covenants, to increase our faith, to find peace, and to do as He did perfectly in His life—minister to others who feel like they don’t belong.” I want to pull from this idea of becoming perfect and helping others do the same to eventually belong in the Kingdom of God, like the Savior did.

Today I’d like to share from two talks, one given by President Nelson and another given by Jeffrey R Holland that builds upon the idea of perfection, and what the Lord asks of us. The highest levels of joy and satisfaction in this life come from keeping the Lord’s commandments and staying on the covenant path. Although we face obstacles of sadness and sorrow on this journey of faithfulness, we will surely find safety, comfort and belonging in Zion as we keep our Spiritual Momentum and never stop moving forward. While at some times in my life I experienced the hardships of not fitting in with my peers in church or community, I’ve never had a more fulfilling sense of belonging in God’s Kingdom by setting my heart upon the things pleasing to the Lord. We can often feel like it’s extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be perfect even as the Lord is perfect, but we still need to become perfected to belong in the Celestial Kingdom forever. This is a lifelong journey in becoming perfected in Christ, but we truly can be perfected, amazing as that sounds. Beginning with President Nelson’s talk titled “Perfection Pending” from the November 1995 Ensign:

If I were to ask which of the Lord's commandments is most difficult to keep, many of us might cite [Matt. 5:48](#): "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."¹ Keeping this commandment can be a concern because each of us is far from perfect, both spiritually and temporally. Reminders come repeatedly. We may lock keys inside the car, or even forget where the car is parked. And not infrequently we walk intently from one part of the house to another, only to forget the reason for the errand.

When comparing one's personal performance with the supreme standard of the Lord's expectation, the reality of imperfection can at times be depressing. My heart goes out to conscientious Saints who, because of their shortcomings, allow feelings of depression to rob them of happiness in life.

We all need to remember: men are that they might have joy—not guilt trips!² We also need to remember that the Lord gives no commandments that are impossible to obey. But sometimes we fail to comprehend them fully.

President Nelson then continues to explain some key points between mortal and eternal perfection:

James gave a practical standard by which mortal perfection could be measured. He said, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man."⁴

Scriptures have described Noah, Seth, and Job as *perfect* men.⁵ No doubt the same term might apply to a large number of faithful disciples in various dispensations. Alma said that "there were many, exceedingly great many,"⁶ who were pure before the Lord.

This does not mean that these people never made mistakes or never had need of correction. The process of perfection includes challenges to overcome and steps to repentance that may be very painful.⁷ There is a proper place for chastisement in the molding of character, for we know that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

Mortal perfection can be achieved as we try to perform every duty, keep every law, and strive to be as perfect in our sphere as our Heavenly Father is in his. If we do the best we can, the Lord will bless us according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts.

I felt that this quote from President Nelson lined up beautifully with Elder Christofferson's words when he said, "In discouraging moments, we may feel that we will never measure up to the Lord's high standards or the expectations of others.⁸ We may unwittingly impose expectations on others—or even ourselves—that are not the Lord's expectations." Continuing with President Nelson's words.

But Jesus asked for more than mortal perfection. The moment he uttered the words "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," he raised our sights beyond the bounds of mortality. Our Heavenly Father has eternal perfection. This very fact merits a much broader perspective.

Recently I studied the English and Greek editions of the New Testament, concentrating on each use of the term *perfect* and its derivatives. Studying both languages together provided some interesting insights, since Greek was the original language of the New Testament.

In [Matt. 5:48](#), the term *perfect* was translated from the Greek *teleios*, which means “complete.” *Teleios* is an adjective derived from the noun *telos*, which means “end.”¹⁰ The infinitive form of the verb is *teleiono*, which means “to reach a distant end, to be fully developed, to consummate, or to finish.”¹¹ Please note that the word does not imply “freedom from error”; it implies “achieving a distant objective.” In fact, when writers of the Greek New Testament wished to describe perfection of behavior—precision or excellence of human effort—they did *not* employ a form of *teleios*; instead, they chose different words.¹²

Teleios is not a total stranger to us. From it comes the prefix *tele-* that we use every day. *Telephone* literally means “distant talk.” *Television* means “to see distantly.” *Telephoto* means “distant light,” and so on.

With that background in mind, let us consider another highly significant statement made by the Lord. Just prior to his crucifixion, he said that on “the third day I *shall be perfected*.”¹³ Think of that! The sinless, errorless Lord—already perfect by our mortal standards—proclaimed his own state of perfection yet to be in the future.¹⁴ His *eternal* perfection would follow his resurrection and receipt of “all power ... in heaven and in earth.”¹⁵

The perfection that the Savior envisions for us is much more than errorless performance. It is the eternal expectation as expressed by the Lord in his great intercessory prayer to his Father— that we might be made perfect and be able to dwell with them in the eternities ahead.¹⁶

The Lord’s entire work and glory pertains to the immortality and eternal life of each human being.¹⁷ He came into the world to do the will of his Father, who sent him.¹⁸ His sacred responsibility was foreseen before the creation¹⁹ and was foretold by all his holy prophets since the world began.²⁰

The atonement of Christ fulfilled the long-awaited purpose for which he had come to the earth. His concluding words upon Calvary’s cross referred to the culmination of his assignment—to atone for all humankind. Then he said, “It is finished.”²¹ Not surprisingly, the Greek word from which *finished* was derived is *teleios*.

That Jesus attained eternal perfection *following* his resurrection is confirmed in the Book of Mormon. It records the visit of the resurrected Lord to the people of ancient America. There he repeated the important injunction previously cited but with one very significant addition. He said, “I would that ye should be perfect *even as I*, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”²² This time he listed himself along with his Father as a perfected personage. Previously he had not.

This talk is just SO GOOD and really helped me understand a fundamental foundational principle, just what it is we are doing here and the point of all this. This is so incredible and I suggest everyone take

[the chance to read this fully.](#) Next we hear some of what Elder Holland has to say in his talk found in the November 2017 (November seems to be an interesting month!) Ensign titled “Be Ye Therefore Perfect--Eventually”.

The scriptures were written to bless and encourage us, and surely they do that. We thank heaven for every chapter and verse we have ever been given. But have you noticed that every now and then a passage will appear that reminds us we *are* falling a little short? For example, the Sermon on the Mount begins with soothing, gentle beatitudes, but in the verses that follow, we are told—among other things—not only not to kill but also not even to be angry. We are told not only not to commit adultery but also not even to have impure thoughts. To those who ask for it, we are to give our coat and then give our cloak also. We are to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and do good to them who hate us.¹

If that is your morning scripture study, and after reading just that far you are pretty certain you are not going to get good marks on your gospel report card, then the final commandment in the chain is sure to finish the job: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father ... in heaven is perfect.”² With that concluding imperative, we want to go back to bed and pull the covers over our head. Such celestial goals seem beyond our reach. Yet surely the Lord would never give us a commandment He knew we could not keep. Let’s see where this quandary takes us. Around the Church I hear many who struggle with this issue: “I am just not good enough.” “I fall so far short.” “I will never measure up.” I hear this from teenagers. I hear it from missionaries. I hear it from new converts. I hear it from lifelong members. One insightful Latter-day Saint, Sister Darla Isackson, has observed that Satan has somehow managed to make covenants and commandments seem like curses and condemnations. For some he has turned the ideals and inspiration of the gospel into self-loathing and misery-making.³

What I now say in no way denies or diminishes any commandment God has ever given us. I believe in His perfection, and I know we are His spiritual sons and daughters with divine potential to become as He is. I also know that, as children of God, we should not demean or vilify ourselves, as if beating up on ourselves is somehow going to make us the person God wants us to become. No! With a willingness to repent and a desire for increased righteousness always in our hearts, I would hope we could pursue personal improvement in a way that doesn’t include getting ulcers or anorexia, feeling depressed or demolishing our self-esteem. That is *not* what the Lord wants for Primary children or anyone else who honestly sings, “I’m trying to be like Jesus.”⁴

To put this issue in context, may I remind all of us that we live in a fallen world and for now we are a fallen people. We are in the *telestial* kingdom; that is spelled with a *t*, not a *c*. As President Russell M. Nelson has taught, here in mortality perfection is still “pending.”

[The Work and the Glory of our Father in Heaven is to bring all of us, His children, to Everlasting Life in the Celestial Kingdom.](#) This is why it’s so important that we now prepare for the redemption of Zion which makes the realization of this ultimate goal possible. We all need to be worthy and prepared to receive the Lord, so that He can take us, imperfect beings, and make perfect things of us. Ultimately this is THE WAY in which all of God’s children end up belonging and return to dwell with our Father in Heaven in Celestial Glory forever. While many of us have struggled to feel like we belong in this life, our

ultimate design is to belong in the Kingdom of our God together. Adding as well that this highlights the importance of standing upon the watchtower especially now as time is extremely short. We need to warn and help as many as we possibly can to belong to the Kingdom of God and be ready to receive it. The Lord invites everyone. Zion is a place of belonging.

Micah's Thoughts:

Recent conversations and interactions have confirmed to me once again the importance of relentlessly seeking truth, anchored on the pyramid of truth...

How many "saints" have gone on missions... how many have served even as mission presidents... how many have been in the church 10-20-40 years! How many have gone to the temple every single week for all those years, etc. and yet know nothing, yet have become nothing- yet are still on

#RungOne

This is what is important to the Lord- learning and becoming something. In Preach My Gospel there is this wonderful quote from President Ballard:

"I am so thoroughly convinced that if we don't set goals in our life and learn how to master the techniques of living to reach our goals, we can reach a ripe old age and look back on our life only to see that we reached but a small part of our full potential. When one learns to master the principles of setting a goal, he will then be able to make a great difference in the results he attains in this life."

– **President M. Russell Ballard** (Talk given to Salt Lake Area young adults, Oct. 18, 1981)

Set goals, strive to improve and be better, etc. or you'll reach a ripe old age in the church and looking back on your life realize that you've accomplished very little- you've wasted away your life.

President Brigham Young:

"This is the land of Zion; but we are not yet prepared to go and establish the Center Stake of Zion. The Lord tried this in the first place. He called the people together to the place where the New Jerusalem and the great temple will be built, and where He will prepare for the City of Enoch. And He gave revelation after revelation; but the people could not abide them, and the Church was scattered and peeled, and the people hunted from place to place till, finally, they were driven into the mountains, and here we are. Now, it is for you and me to prepare to return back again; not to our fatherland, in many cases, but to return east, and by-and-by to build up the Center Stake of Zion. We are not prepared to do this now, but we are here to learn until we are of one heart and of one mind in the things of this life. Do all the Latter-day Saints arrive at this? No; they have not, our former experience has proved this. Of the great many who have been baptized into this Church, but few have been able to abide the word of the Lord; they have fallen out on the right and on the left, and have foundered by the way, and a few have gathered together. Will these be prepared to enter the celestial kingdom?"

Some of them will be, and will become kings and priests; but not all of these, only a portion of them. They do not know what to do with the revelations, commandments, and blessings of God. Talking, for instance, about everyday things, how many do we see here that know what to do with money and property when they get it? Are their eyes single to the building up of the kingdom of God? No; they are single to the building up of themselves. With all the knowledge that Elders have obtained who have traveled in the Church five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, or thirty years, there are few who understand the principles of the kingdom and whose eyes are single to the building of it up in all respects; but their eyes are like the fool's eye—looking to the ends of the earth. They want this and that, and they do not know what to do; they lack wisdom. By-and-by, perhaps, their wealth will depart from them, and when left poor and penniless, they will humble themselves before the Lord that they may be saved.

This is the situation of the Latter-day Saints, yet they are increasing. It is astonishing to look back and see the ignorance that was manifested by the people in their first gathering together; their experience then was far less than their experience and doings now. Still we are far short of being what we should and must be.

(JD 11:321, Brigham Young, The Improved Condition of the Saints, Etc.)

Elder Christofferson referenced a quote by Elder Holland:

*“‘Come as you are,’ a loving Father says to each of us, but He adds, ‘Don’t plan to stay as you are.’ We smile and remember that God is determined to make of us more than we thought we could be” (“Songs Sung and Unsung,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 51).*

I appreciate what Elder Christofferson said here about inviting everyone- an invitation is a commitment and then he said, “*Let us leave judgment in the Lord’s hands and those He has commissioned*”. Far too often all we hear from the lazy masses is simply “don’t judge”- not even attempting to differentiate between different types of judgement let alone those commissioned of the Lord who very much so will be involved in judging.

Section III (Lauren)

A second facet of the doctrine of belonging has to do with our own contributions. Although we rarely think about it, much of our belonging comes from our service and the sacrifices we make for others and for the Lord. Excessive focus on our personal needs or our own comfort can frustrate that sense of belonging.

We strive to follow the Savior’s doctrine:

“Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your *minister*. ...

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”¹²

Belonging comes not as we wait for it but as we reach out to help one another.

Today, unfortunately, consecrating oneself to a cause or sacrificing anything for anyone else is becoming countercultural. In a piece for *Deseret Magazine* last year, author Rod Dreher recounted a conversation with a young mother in Budapest:

“I am on a Budapest tram with a ... friend in her early 30s—let’s call her Kristina—while we are on the way to interview an older [Christian] woman who, with her late husband, withstood persecution by the communist state. As we bump along the city’s streets, Kristina talks about how hard it is to be honest with friends her age about the struggles she faces as a wife and mother of young children.

“Kristina’s difficulties are completely ordinary for a young woman learning how to be a mom and a wife—yet the prevailing attitude among her generation is that life’s difficulties are a threat to one’s well-being and should be refused. Do she and her husband argue at times? Then she should leave him, they say. Are her children annoying her? Then she should send them to day care.

“Kristina worries that her friends don’t grasp that trials, and even suffering, are a normal part of life—and maybe even part of a good life, if that suffering teaches us how to be patient, kind and loving. ...

“... University of Notre Dame sociologist of religion Christian Smith found in his study of adults [ages] 18 to 23 that most of them believe society is nothing more than ‘a collection of autonomous individuals out to enjoy life.’”¹³

By this philosophy, anything that one finds difficult “is a form of oppression.”¹⁴

By contrast, our pioneer forebears derived a deep sense of belonging, unity, and hope in Christ by the sacrifices they made to serve missions, build temples, abandon comfortable homes under duress and begin again, and in a multitude of other ways consecrate themselves and their means to the cause of Zion. They were willing to sacrifice even their lives if necessary. And we are all the beneficiaries of their endurance. The same is true for many today who may lose family and friends, forfeit employment opportunities, or otherwise suffer discrimination or intolerance as a consequence of being baptized. Their reward, however, is a powerful sense of belonging among the covenant people. Any sacrifice we make in the Lord’s cause helps to confirm our place with Him who gave His life a ransom for many.

Lauren’s Thoughts:

Elder Christofferson’s words: A second facet of the doctrine of belonging has to do with our own contributions. Although we rarely think about it, much of our belonging comes from our service and the sacrifices we make for others and for the Lord. Excessive focus on our personal needs or our own comfort can frustrate that sense of belonging.

My words: In this paragraph we get the introduction of doctrine that is critical to our success as covenant members of Jesus Christ’s church, watered down as it is. Namely, the doctrine of sacrifice, which, in a nutshell, is that the services we perform, and especially the sacrifices we make, for others and for the Lord, are 100 percent connected to our conversion, to the faith we are developing in the Lord, and to our ultimate salvation.

Bruce R. McConkie said: The law of sacrifice is that we are willing to sacrifice all that we have for the truth's sake—our character and reputation; our honor and applause; our good name among men; our houses, lands, and families: all things, even our very lives if need be.

Joseph Smith said, “A religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary [to lead] unto life and salvation.” (Lectures on Faith, p. 58.)... **Bruce R. McConkie** (Obedience, Consecration, and Sacrifice, 1975)

Back to my words: Excessive focus on our personal needs or on our own personal comfort are indicators of qualities that would require individual focus and repentance, and if left unattended to, these qualities would naturally impede our sense of belonging. How can we belong to Jesus Christ's church and worship Him when we are busy setting ourselves up as gods and worshipping ourselves? Elder Christofferson goes on with a scripture reference and brief reiteration of this teaching:

“Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your *minister*. ... “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”¹²

Belonging comes not as we wait for it but as we reach out to help one another.

Amen.

Elder Christofferson then goes on to share a story published in a well known magazine talking about how sacrifice and consecration are becoming countercultural. The story should not be particularly remarkable in my opinion, to anyone who hasn't been living under a rock for the last decade. But Elder Christofferson essentially uses the story to come to the conclusion that our culture is shifting towards a philosophy which believes, “anything one finds difficult is a form of oppression.”

Maybe I am just more cynical than Elder Christofferson, but I would go even further and say that we are past the conditional verbs like ‘becoming’ and ‘shifting’ and say that we ‘have become’ and we ‘have shifted’ into a society that sees difficulty as oppression and sees sacrifice as undesirable. This is the state of our time. Something to be expected, endured, and fought against? Yes to all three. In 4th Nephi we get an interesting glimpse into the downfall of a Zion community. The chapter heading reads:

The Nephites and the Lamanites are all converted unto the Lord—They have all things in common, work miracles, and prosper in the land— After two centuries, divisions, evils, false churches, and persecutions arise—After three hundred years, both the Nephites and the Lamanites are wicked—Ammaron hides up the sacred records.

Sound familiar? If we want to be reminded of the long game the Lord is playing with His people, or if we want to get an idea of what comes next, we can look to this chapter and try and find where we are in comparison to the Nephites. (See somewhere around vs 27)

Elder Christofferson then shifts away from pointing out the awful condition of Babylon all around us today to hold up the pioneers of the early church as examples of better times. He says:

By contrast, our pioneer forebears derived a deep sense of belonging, unity, and hope in Christ by the sacrifices they made to serve missions, build temples, abandon comfortable homes under duress and begin again, and in a multitude of other ways consecrate themselves and their means to the cause of Zion. They were willing to sacrifice even their lives if necessary. And we are all the beneficiaries of their endurance.

How true this is for many of those early saints. Not all of them, or we would be safely in the bosom of Zion right now, but I won't get distracted and go down that rabbit hole. Elder Christofferson's point is to illustrate that the sacrifices of the valiant early saints resulted in feelings of true belonging in the Lord's covenant. I am grateful day and night for the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints and for those many consecrated men and women. Elder Christofferson goes on:

The same is true for many today who may lose family and friends, forfeit employment opportunities, or otherwise suffer discrimination or intolerance as a consequence of being baptized. Their reward, however, is a powerful sense of belonging among the covenant people. Any sacrifice we make in the Lord's cause helps to confirm our place with Him who gave His life a ransom for many.

May we each work every day to repent until we have given our whole will and our whole being over to the Lord. May we all have powerful, enduring, secure attachment to Him, and come to be like Him, that we may belong with Him and with His people. May we finish the work that the early saints started, and be a part of the redemption of His kingdom on Earth. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen

Micah's Thoughts:

I can't stress this enough- how many people will feel undesired or uninvited or not a part of the group, but yet who provide nothing. They are first to complain when they don't feel like they are getting something and last to volunteer when something needs to be done.

The other thing that this ties back to once again? Oh you guessed it- priestcraft.

Mosiah 2:17

And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God

Let's provide a little context to what King Benjamin says here.

Mosiah 2

12 I say unto you that as I have been suffered to ^aspend my days in your service, even up to this time, and have not sought ^bgold nor silver nor any manner of riches of you;

14 And even I, myself, have ^alabored with mine own ^bhands that I might serve you, and that ye should not be ^claden with taxes, and that there should nothing come upon you which was

grievous to be borne—and of all these things which I have spoken, ye yourselves are witnesses this day.

18 Behold, ye have called me your king; and if I, whom ye call your king, do labor to ^aserve you, then ought not ye to labor to serve one another?

19 And behold also, if I, whom ye call your king, who has spent his days in your service, and yet has been in the service of God, do merit any thanks from you, O how you ought to ^athank your heavenly ^bKing!

So here is the added layer. Are we providing service if we are laboring for money? If we are laboring for gain? No- it is no longer a service but a craft.

Can you not see the difference?

Meaning what? If service is how we become one, if we are practicing priestcraft, if we are not serving, if we are laboring for money and shall perish, we will never belong with Christ or his people and will never feel like we belong.

How many ways can this be taught to this stiff-necked and wicked generation before they will see truth, yea as plain as word can be?

The solution is service. And when you serve as the Savior would have us serve, not for money or gain, but for the glory of God what is that? This is charity. And charity is the solution to priestcraft, it is the antidote to priestcraft, it is synonymous with service.

2 Nephi 26:

29 He commandeth that there shall be no ^apriestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set ^bthemselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get ^cgain and ^dpraise of the world; but they seek not the ^ewelfare of Zion.

30 Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have ^acharity, which ^bcharity is ^clove. And except they should have charity they were nothing. Wherefore, if they should have charity they would not suffer the laborer in Zion to perish.

31 But the ^alaborer in ^bZion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for ^cmoney they shall perish.

John 15:

13 Greater ^alove hath no man than this, that a man lay down his ^blife for his ^cfriends.

Luke 9:

58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

Mosiah 18:

24 And he also commanded them that the priests whom he had ordained ^ashould ^blabor with their own hands for their support.

The footnote for “labor” in this scripture takes you to Paul speaking of preaching the gospel:

1 Corinthians 9:

18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Alma 30

12 And this Anti-Christ, whose name was Korihor, (and the law could have no hold upon him) began to preach unto the people ... And after this manner did he preach, saying:

27 ... [Y]e lead away this people after the foolish traditions of your fathers, and according to your own desires; and ye keep them down, even as it were in bondage, that ye may glut yourselves with the labors of their hands, that they durst not look up with boldness, and that they durst not enjoy their rights and privileges.

28 Yea, they durst not make use of that which is their own lest they should offend their priests, who do yoke them according to their desires, and have brought them to believe, by their traditions and their dreams and their whims and their visions and their pretended mysteries, that they should, if they did not do according to their words, offend some unknown being, who they say is God—a being who never has been seen or known, who never was nor ever will be

31 And he did rise up in great swelling words before Alma, and did revile against the priests and teachers, accusing them of leading away the people after the silly traditions of their fathers, for the sake of glutting on the labors of the people.

Alma 30

32 Now Alma said unto him: Thou knowest that we do not glut ourselves upon the labors of this people; for behold I have labored even from the commencement of the reign of the judges until now, with mine own hands for my support, notwithstanding my many travels round about the land to declare the word of God unto my people.

33 And notwithstanding the many labors which I have performed in the church, I have never received so much as even one senine for my labor; neither has any of my brethren, save it were in the judgment-seat; and then we have received only according to law for our time.

34 And now, if we do not receive anything for our labors in the church, what doth it profit us to labor in the church save it were to declare the truth, that we may have rejoicings in the joy of our brethren?

35 Then why sayest thou that we preach unto this people to get gain, when thou, of thyself, knowest that we receive no gain?

I guess Alma didn't know that all he had to do was respond "YOU DON'T KNOW MY HEART! DAAAARRRR! I DON'T TEACH FALSE DOCTRINE! DAAAAAAAAR! It has NOTHING TO DO WITH GAIN! DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAR!" and then sit back and say "checkmate!"

I can respond the same way... and thus because of that I can also say "if you know I have not received ANYTHING for MY LABOR... what doth it profit me SAVE IT WAS TO DECLARE THE TRUTH?!"

Our only "reward" is that we may have rejoicings in the joy of our brethren!

All those that take gain for their labors CANNOT declare that! Period!

They are only in service to themselves.

I could not agree more with what Elder Christofferson said here, that “consecrating oneself to a cause or sacrificing anything for anyone else is becoming countercultural”. To even suggest that such sacrifices are not only acceptable but are required from those who seek to build Zion and obtain a place in the heavenly kingdom above will incur the hot displeasure of “Saints” every single time. I hate this world and I wish that when I went into Church buildings and talked to other Saints that they displayed even a modicum of distaste for Babylon and the world. And once again, if I have to be the last righteous man declaring this, so be it. Is Zion a hill worth dying on? You better believe it! Is Zion something worth losing friends over? You better believe it. Is Zion worth being ridiculed by those in the great and spacious building, mocking and pointing in their affluence? You better believe it.

Matthew 10:

37 He that ^aloveth father or mother ^bmore than me is not worthy of me: and he that ^cloveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 And he that taketh not his ^across, and followeth after me, is not ^bworthy of me.

Matthew 19:

29 And every one that hath ^aforsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my ^bname's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit ^ceverlasting life.

Section IV (Mason)

The final and most important element of the doctrine of belonging is the central role of Jesus Christ. We don't join the Church for fellowship alone, important as that is. We join for redemption through the love and grace of Jesus Christ. We join to secure the ordinances of salvation and exaltation for ourselves and those we love on both sides of the veil. We join to participate in a great project to establish Zion in preparation for the Lord's return.

The Church is the custodian of the covenants of salvation and exaltation that God offers us through the ordinances of the holy priesthood.¹⁵ It is by keeping these covenants that we obtain the highest and deepest sense of belonging. President Russell M. Nelson recently wrote: “Once you and I have made a covenant with God, our relationship with Him becomes much closer than before our covenant. Now we are bound together. Because of our covenant with God, He will never tire in His efforts to help us, and we will never exhaust His merciful patience with us. Each of us has a special place in God’s heart. ...

“... Jesus Christ is the guarantor of those covenants (see [Hebrews 7:22](#); [8:6](#)).”¹⁶

If we will remember this, the Lord’s high hopes for us will inspire, not discourage, us.

We can feel joy as we pursue, individually and communally, “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹⁷ Despite disappointments and setbacks along the way, it is a grand quest. We lift and encourage each other in pursuing the upward path, knowing that no matter tribulation and no matter delays in promised blessings, we can “be of good cheer; [for Christ has] overcome the world,”¹⁸ and we are with Him. Being one with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is without doubt the ultimate in belonging.¹⁹

Thus, the doctrine of belonging comes down to this—each one of us can affirm: Jesus Christ died for me; He thought me worthy of His blood. He loves me and can make all the difference in my life. As I repent, His grace will transform me. I am one with Him in the gospel covenant; I belong in His Church and kingdom; and I belong in His cause to bring redemption to all of God’s children.

I testify you do belong, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Footnotes:

1. See [Revelation 5:9](#); see also [1 Nephi 19:17](#); [Mosiah 15:28](#); [Doctrine and Covenants 10:51](#); [77:8, 11](#).

2. [Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith](#) (2007), 186.

3. [Doctrine and Covenants 38:27](#).

4. One perceptive observer noted:

“Religion that is merely a private affair has been, until our time, unknown in the annals of mankind—and for good reason. Such religion quickly diminishes into an indoor pleasure, a kind of hobby of one or more individuals, like reading a book or watching television. So it is not astonishing that the search for spirituality has become so fashionable. It is what individuals, liberated from religion, desperately seek as a substitute.

“Spirituality is indeed an integral part of all religions—but a minor part, and it cannot be a substitute for the whole. Religion is not some kind of psychic exercise that occasionally offers a transcendental experience. It either shapes one’s life—all of one’s life—or it vanishes, leaving behind anxious, empty souls that no psychotherapy can reach. And for religion to shape one’s life, it needs to be public and communal; it needs to be connected to the dead and the unborn” (Irving Kristol, “The Welfare State’s Spiritual Crisis,” *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 3, 1997, A14).

5. [1 Corinthians 12:12–13, 25–26](#).

6. See Russell M. Nelson, “[Perfection Pending](#),” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86–88; Jeffrey R. Holland, “[Be Ye Therefore Perfect—Eventually](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 40–42.

7. [1 Samuel 16:7](#).

8. As expressed by Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, “Come as you are,’ a loving Father says to each of us, but He adds, ‘Don’t plan to stay as you are.’ We smile and remember that God is determined to make

of us more than we thought we could be” (“[Songs Sung and Unsung](#),” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 51).

9. Jodi King, “[Belonging in the Church through the Lens of Infertility](#),” *Ensign*, Mar. 2020, 72, 74–75; *Liahona*, Mar. 2020, 46, 48–49.

10. [Ephesians 4:12–13](#).

11. [Luke 14:21](#).

12. [Mark 10:43, 45](#); emphasis added.

13. Rod Dreher, “A Christian Survival Guide for a Secular Age,” *Deseret Magazine*, Apr. 2021, 68.

14. Dreher, “A Christian Survival Guide for a Secular Age,” 68.

15. See [Doctrine and Covenants 84:19–22](#).

16. Russell M. Nelson, “[The Everlasting Covenant](#),” *Liahona*, Oct. 2022, 6, 10.

17. [Ephesians 4:13](#).

18. [John 16:33](#).

19. See [John 17:20–23](#). “And now, I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever” ([Ether 12:41](#)).

Mason’s Thoughts

Elder Christofferson’s words – Black

Mason’s words and thoughts – Blue

Scriptures – Black & highlighted yellow

Quotes from Prophets & Apostles – Purple

Quotes from Student Manuals – Green

The focus of my section will be on these words.

“The final and most important element of the doctrine of belonging is the central role of Jesus Christ. We don’t join the Church for fellowship alone, important as that is. We join for redemption through the love and grace of Jesus Christ. We join to secure the ordinances of...those we love on both sides of the veil. We join to participate in a great project to establish Zion in preparation for the Lord’s return.

The Church is the custodian of the covenants of salvation and exaltation that God offers us through the ordinances of the holy priesthood.”

One of the footnotes from Elder Christofferson’s talk leads us to:

D&C 84

19 And this greater ^apriesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the ^bkey of the ^cmysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the ^dknowledge of God.

20 Therefore, in the ^aordinances thereof, the power of ^bgodliness is manifest.

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the ^aauthority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is ^bnot manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no ^aman can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

D&C 28

7 For I have given him (Joseph Smith) the ^akeys of the ^bmysteries, and the revelations which are sealed, until I shall appoint unto them another in his stead.

D&C 35

18 And I have given unto him the keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed, even things which were from the foundation of the world, and the things which shall come from this time until the time of my coming, if he abide in me, and if not, another will I plant in his stead.

D&C 28

D&C 64

5 And the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom shall not be taken from my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., through the means I have appointed, while he liveth, inasmuch as he obeyeth mine ordinances.

The work of our dispensation can not be completed with out Joseph Smith. The keys were given to and were never and will never be taken away from him. He had a mission to complete while in his mortal body, he has a mission to complete in the spirit world and he has a mission to complete in his resurrected form where none can hurt or “Mar” him again. This dispensation’s work was opened with Joseph, and it will be completed with Joseph. Joseph did all that God had asked him to do while in the flesh, even laying down his own life to do it. And now God is obligated to ensure that He sees the prophet through on completing the rest of his divinely appointed works.

“It was always a strange thing to me, that Joseph Smith should have to lay down his life, until I found the following passage of Scripture: it is contained in the 9th chapter of Hebrews, 16 and 17 verses:

“For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise, it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.” Heb. 9:16-17

Joseph was the instrument through which God ushered in the dispensation of the fullness of times—the greatest of all dispensations—in which God will complete His work, pertaining to the salvation of men on the earth; it was a great work—Joseph was to testify of it—and “where a testament is there must needs be,” says Paul, “the death of the testator.” Heb. 9:16 So when Joseph Smith fell by the old well-curb at Carthage jail, pierced by the bullets of assassins, he placed the capstone upon his mission by sealing it with his blood—and from that time henceforth it is in force on all the world. D&C 135:3”(*JD 25:130 Brigham H. Roberts*)

By Joseph sealing his mortal work with his blood, it caused a Devine strength to be placed upon the Lords people and this work, God’s promises were activated. The covenants, blessings, and promises of old were not forgotten, but brought to us anew in an everlasting covenant. This dispensations work will be completed with Joseph Smith at the head of it. He earned that right and God will grant him the power to finish it. “No unhallowed hand” will stop it or finish it. No one else has been consecrated to finish Joseph’s mission in its fullness. But many have been tasked in assisting him in this great latter-day work.

“If we ask who will stand at the head of the resurrection in this last dispensation, the answer is—Joseph Smith, Junior, the Prophet of God. He is the man who will be resurrected and receive the keys of the resurrection, and he will seal this authority upon others, and they will hunt up their friends and resurrect them when they shall have been officiated for, and bring them up. And we will have revelations to know our forefathers clear back to Father Adam and Mother Eve, and we will enter into the temples of God and officiate for them. Then man will be sealed to man until the chain is made perfect back to Adam, so that there will be a perfect chain of priesthood from Adam to the winding-up scene.”

(*Brigham Young - JD 15:139*)

“All must come forth from the grave, some time or other, in the selfsame tabernacles that they possessed while living on the earth. It will be just as Ezekiel has described it—bone will come to its bone, and flesh and sinew will cover the skeleton, and at the Lord’s bidding breath will enter the body, and we shall appear, many of us, a marvel to ourselves [see [Ezekiel 37:1–14](#)].

I heard Joseph Smith say, at the time he was making a tomb at Nauvoo, that he expected, when the time came when the grave would be rent asunder, that he would arise and embrace his father and mother, and shake hands with his friends. It was his written request that when he died, some kind friends would see that he was buried near his bosom friends, so that when he and they arose in the morning of the first resurrection, he could embrace them, saying, “My father! My mother!”

How consoling it is to those who are called upon to mourn the loss of dear friends in death, to know that we will again be associated with them! How encouraging to all who live according to the revealed principles of truth, perhaps more especially to those whose lives are pretty well spent, who have borne the heat and burden of the day, to know that ere long we shall burst the barriers of the tomb, and come forth living and immortal souls, to enjoy the society of our tried and trusted friends, no more to be afflicted with the seeds of death, **and to finish the work the Father has given us to do!**”

(Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor, Chapter 6, Pg 49)

I absolutely love this quote. When we have a desire to do the Lord’s work in our probationary state, that desire will carry through with us right into the resurrection. I think of the Prophet Joseph Smith. How he yearned and desired to carry out all the work that God had for him to do. This quote just reaffirms to me, that he still is not done. That he will be healed and come forth mighty and strong, filled with joy and ready to continue on and finish the work.

“...**the Prophet Joseph Smith shall come unto us again.** He has merely taken another mission in advance of us. **He fulfilled the [p. 33a] mission given unto him on earth.** The Lord was satisfied with his labors here. **He lived long enough to endow his brethren with full authority to carry on the work that he had begun on the earth...**

...All these and many more are laboring in the spirit world preparing the spirits thereof to receive the benefits and blessings which are now about to be offered to them in the temples of God. In other words, **“a ticket of leave” is about to be sent to them** to the effect that their friends on the earth have officiated in their behalf, have complied with the ordinances which are appointed for their redemption, which will enable them to advance into a higher sphere, to walk upon a higher plane, to enter a higher class where they can be further instructed and prepared for a glorious resurrection...**there will be another mission undertaken. The next mission will be to come and prepare the way in Zion, and in her Stakes, and in the temples of our God for turning the key of the resurrection of the dead, to bring forth those that are asleep, and to exalt them among the Gods. And who will be first and foremost? Why, he whom God has chosen and placed first and foremost to hold the keys of this last dispensation.**

How long will it be? It is not given to me to say the month, the day, or the hour; but it is given unto me to say that **that time is nigh at hand.** The [p. 34a] time is drawing near (much nearer than scarcely any of us can now comprehend) when **Joseph will be clothed upon with immortality, when his brother Hyrum will be clothed upon with immortality, when the martyrs will be raised from the dead, together with their faithful brethren who have performed a good mission in the spirit world—they, too, will be called to assist in the work of the glorious resurrection.** The Lord Jesus, who was the firstfruits of the dead, the firstfruit of them that sleep, 1 Cor. 15:20 and who holds the keys of the resurrection, **will bring to pass the resurrection of the Prophet Joseph and his brethren, and will set**

them to work in bringing about the resurrection of their brethren as He has set them to work in all the other branches of the labor from the beginning.

- *Erastus Snow (JD 25:29, Near Coming of Christ, Etc.)*

Jesus Christ is central to everything Joseph was working towards. The Heavens were open to the Prophet, he communed with God and the Savior in person. He learned from Angels, and past prophets. And they all directed him to Jesus Christ. The Prophet Joseph Smith's work was central to Jesus Christ. His focus was establishing a kingdom and readying a people to receive Christ when He would come again.

“I said to Brother Joseph, the spring before he was killed, ‘You are laying out work for twenty years.’ He replied, ‘You have as yet scarcely begun to work; but I will set you enough to last you during your lives, for I am going to rest.’ All I can do or ask now is to do the work, so that it will be right and acceptable to him when he comes here again.”

- **Brigham Young** (October 7, 1857, Journal of Discourses 5:331)

Brothers and sisters for us to do the work right, we must focus ourselves towards Jesus Christ. We must learn the doctrine and commit ourselves to teaching it and sharing it properly and honestly. There can be no underlying agendas when it comes to preaching the gospel. We can not do it while seeking for our own gain or profit. It must be done in a way that is acceptable to the Lord. We will have to face Him, and we will have to account for the work that we have done. Will He find our work acceptable and untarnished? Or will he find that we have been dishonest and deceitful, leading many away from His light and truth, damning our souls in the process.

We need to be honest in our self assessments, figure out what we are lacking in and what are weaknesses are. Do not forget about strengthening your relationship with Christ. We can strengthen that relationship by taking his name upon us and continually repenting. Through the process of being broken down and humbled, I have found myself longing for Jesus Christ personally. I have experienced times when I was in a state of so much pain, and anguish that I knew the only way I could push through and survive was to anchor myself to Jesus Christ through honest repentance and the healing power of the Atonement. I desired to come before Him weak and lowly because I sought to be changed. I desired to become what He wanted me to become. I wanted to belong with Him.

Ether 12

27 And if men come unto me I will show unto them their ^aweakness. I ^bgive unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my ^cgrace is sufficient for all men that ^dhumble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make ^eweak things become strong unto them.

“This change, called conversion, is possible only through the Savior. **As we are made new in Christ, our very natures change and we no longer want to go back to our old ways.**

The Savior has promised that He will make us equal to His work. “Follow me,” He said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matt 4:19) As we follow Him, He blesses us with gifts, talents, and the strength to do His will, allowing us to go beyond our comfort zones and do things we’ve never before thought possible...It means preparing ourselves to answer His call by saying, “I’ll go where you want me to go; I’ll say what you want me to say; I’ll do what you want me to do; I’ll be what you want me to be.”

To be who Heavenly Father wants us to be, we follow Jesus Christ. I testify that He is continually calling us to follow Him.” (*Elder Robert D. Hales – Being a More Christian Christian*)

When that desire for change comes and we listen to the promptings of the spirit and act upon those promptings, we receive His helping hand. Our eyes become open to our true potential as children of our Father in Heaven. As joint Heirs with our Savior Jesus Christ. And as these children with this divine potential, we seek to push on with the Work of God and remain true to it. We desire to see the blessings and promises that the Prophets of Old and modern day have testified of come to pass. We desire it to be so, because we come to understand what our Savior Jesus Christ has gone through to make these promises a reality in our lives.

Isaiah 53: 4-5

4 ¶ Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 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.

“There is no sin, no guilt, no shame, no fear, no loneliness, no heartache, no loss, no depression, no sadness, no terror, no pain, no challenge, no weakness that Jesus has not experienced and overcome. He has all power over all things.

...He will forgive you and cleanse you and change your heart. This is the redeeming power of the Atonement. If you turn to Christ when you face challenges and need capacity beyond your own, He can strengthen you and magnify your capacity. This is the strengthening power of the Atonement.

If we come unto Christ and are faithful to our covenants, Jesus will sanctify all of our mortal experience to our blessing both now and forever. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we may become more and more like Him—we may walk in the newness of life, His sons and daughters, clean, pure in heart, filled with the pure love of Christ, blessed with joy and happiness and peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.”

(Elder Kim B. Clark Of the Seventy - The Redeeming and Strengthening Power of the Savior's Atonement)

When we truly understand what Christ has done for us and what is in store for those that stay true to His doctrine and His words, we desire to belong with Him. We desire to belong in a place that we may dwell with Him. We desire to be redeemed and to put on the Strength of Zion, to push ourselves daily to carry on the work that was started by the Prophet Joseph Smith. We strive to build up the Kingdom of God, Gather Israel on both sides of the Veil, and prepare a people and a place where the Savior can come and dwell.

2 Nephi 27:24–28. “A Marvelous Work and a Wonder

“The “marvelous work and a wonder” spoken of by the Lord in 2 Nephi 27:26 includes the Book of Mormon, the restoration of the priesthood and the Church, and the presence of latter-day prophets on the earth. But it is even more than these things. It is the restoration of all things, including the establishment of Zion on the earth again.

(Book of Mormon Student Manual)

“When will Zion be redeemed? When will the Savior make His appearance in the midst of His people? When will the veil be taken away, that we may behold the glory of God? Can any of you answer these questions? Yes, readily, when I tell you. The redemption of Zion is the first step preparatory to the two last-named events.

“Just as soon as the Latter-day Saints are ready and **prepared to return to Independence, Jackson County, in the state of Missouri, North America**, just so soon will the voice of the Lord be heard, ‘Arise now, Israel, and make your way to the Center Stake of Zion.’ We must be pure to be prepared to build up Zion.” (Brigham Young - July 28, 1861, Journal of Discourses 9:138)

“The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the turning of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, *even those who are in heaven.*” (Joseph Smith - Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 311.)

How do we prepare and ready ourselves for this?

D&C 90:36–37. The Lord Will Chasten Zion until She Overcomes

Elder Melvin J. Ballard said of the Lord’s promise to see that Zion overcomes and is clean: “That kind of promise entails the necessity of chastisement, when we need to be chastened and corrected and brought to a condition of repentance. I recognize that the Lord cannot fulfil his work nor accomplish his purposes without our willing obedience. He will not use this people unless we are willing to be used; but he has means of correcting, he has means of chastisement, which he will apply from time to time, *and the only thing that impedes our progress today is our own lack of willingness to follow the counsel of those whom God has appointed to lead this people, because of the imagination of our hearts that we are wiser than they are.*” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1921, p. 100.)

(Doctrine & Covenants Student Manual)

“Given the kind of high adventure that we know is coming to us such as is contained in the prophecy of Heber C. Kimball, we must be prepared to speak plainly. President Kimball said that prior to the rebuilding of the Church in Missouri, **“The Saints will be put to tests that will try the integrity of the best of them.** The pressure will become so great that the more righteous among them will cry unto the Lord Day and night until deliverance comes.” (Neal A. Maxwell - *Wherefore Ye Must Press Forward [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1977], pp.109-123*)

Doctrine and Covenants 101:17–21. Zion and her stakes will be established

Despite the Saints’ expulsion from Jackson County, Missouri, the Lord reaffirmed that “Zion shall not be moved out of her place, notwithstanding her children are scattered” (D&C 101:17). Although the stakes of Zion have spread over the face of the earth, “the center place,” Jackson County, continues to be designated by the Lord as the location for the city of New Jerusalem (see D&C 57:1–3; 101:17, 20–21).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–1985) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “...**learn the great concepts involved and make ourselves worthy for any work the Lord may lay upon us in our day and time. Some things must yet precede the building up of Jackson County**” (A New Witness for the Articles of Faith [1985], 586).

(Doctrine & Covenants Student Manual)

Do not comprise the work of God, ever. Focus yourself on Jesus Christ and keep your integrity intact. Do not be a stumbling block towards others who desire to belong with Jesus Christ, who desire to redeem Zion. Be a helper of the Lord's work and not a hinderance. Take part in the divine calling to gather Israel on both sides of the veil. Learn the doctrine and teach it correctly. Enlighten others that they too desire to come unto and belong with Christ. I know that all these wonderful promises will come to pass, I know that Christ lives and that he will return. I know this because I have entered into a covenant with Him, and I desire to belong with Him. I desire to be a part of this great work, and I desire to link arms and be along side so many of you in this work. I love being with you. I have desired to belong among saints like those in this Zion or Bust group for so long. Now that I am here, I feel empowered in the strength and zeal of Zion because it is among you. I desire for all to be finishers and to belong in that place where the Savior will be present with His people. We belong in Zion, with Joseph Smith, with our friends and those whom we love. We belong with our Savior Jesus Christ, and I testify of this in his name. Amen.

Micah's Thoughts:

It will be nice, oh who am I kidding, it will be amazing beyond description, just thinking about it brings me relief- the day when those who made covenants with the Lord and who were serious about them will be united in one location under one banner. And it will no more be said "oh those are just Micah's opinions and interpretations of scriptures which he reads way too literally and plainly" but every man will know the Lord and his doctrine from the least to the greatest. All who are upon Mount Zion.

"All my life I have shied away from these disturbing and highly unpopular -- even offensive -- themes [the uses of money]. But I cannot do so any longer, because in my old age I have taken to reading the scriptures and there have had it forced upon my reluctant attention, that from the time of Adam to the present day, Zion has been pitted against Babylon, and the name of the game has always been money -- "power and gain" "

-Hugh Nibley (Approaching Zion, Foreword)

"Joseph Smith declared, "Brethren, we are gathering to this beautiful land to build up Zion. . . . But since I have been here I perceive the spirit of selfishness, coveteousness exists in the hearts of the saints. . . . Here are those who begin to spread out, buying up all the land they are able to do; . . . thinking to lay foundations for themselves only, looking to their own individual familys. . . . Now I want to tell you that Zion cannot be built up in eny such way. . . . I see signs put out, Beer signs, speculative scheems are being introduced. This is the ways of the world -- Babylon indeed, and I tell you in the name of the God of Israel, if thare is not repentance . . . you will be Broken up and scattered from this choice land [sic].

We all know that this prophecy was literally fulfilled: God would not tolerate such a mockery of Zion. We cannot compromise between the way of Babylon and the way of Zion, because they do lead in opposite directions, as Brigham Young explains: "I am sorry that this people are worldly-minded. . . . Their affections are upon . . . their farms, upon their property, their houses and possessions, and in the same ratio that this is the case, the Holy Spirit of God -- the spirit of their calling -- forsakes them, and they are overcome with the spirit of the evil one."

Every step in the direction of increasing one's personal holdings is a step away from Zion, which is another way of saying, as the Lord has proclaimed in various ways, that one cannot serve two masters: to the degree in which he loves the one he will hate the other, and so it is with God and business, for mammon is simply the standard Hebrew word for any kind of financial dealing. So money is the name of the game by which the devil cleverly decoys the minds of the Saints from God's work to his."

-Hugh Nibley (Approaching Zion, Chapter Two)

The reason why I put in these Hugh Nibley quotes is because the doctrine of belonging is only important as it pertains to the two systems- belonging to Babylon or belonging to Zion. And I want to belong to Zion. That's the group that I'm like- that I want to be with.

Elder Bednar:

"How will I know where I'm going to go? I can answer that for you. You don't have to die to find out.

If living the gospel for you is hard, if it's a chore. "Uh, if I just wasn't a Latter-day Saint I could have fun."

If that's what you're like when you die, guess where you're going to go? With other people who feel the same way – because that's the law that you've learned to love.

If during the course of your life, a little bit at a time, you have learned to love living the gospel, guess where you're going when you die?

With people who love living the gospel.

The Lord is not going to have to tell you when you come into His presence, you won't think, "Gee, I hope he's in a good mood today. I hope he gives me some extra points. So my grade will be a little bit better."

When you come into His presence, you will go where you know you belong. Based on what we have desired to do and become while we have lived on the earth.

If you can look your Bishop in the eye because you're worthy and clean, you already know what the day of judgment will be like.

There's no awkwardness, no embarrassment, no shame. Living the gospel is not hard. Not living the gospel is what's hard. And it is joyful to live it."

(Q&A Session, Chile, 2016)

We will go with those that we are like. If you're of Zion you will go with those of Zion. If you're of Babylon, if you're of mammon, if you are of money you will go with those you are like.

"My sense of urgency comes from the fact that I spend all my days now with the scriptures. And the two marks of the Church I see are and have been for a long time these: a reverence for wealth and a contempt for the scriptures. Naturally, the two go hand in hand. We should call

attention to the fact that these things we are doing are against the work of the Lord. There is one saying of Joseph Smith I think of quite often: “If the heavens seem silent at a time when we desperately need revelation, it is because of covetousness in the Church. God has often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness.” And now the Church isn’t just shot through with covetousness, it is saturated with covetousness. And so the heavens are going to be closed. We’re told we don’t get revelation if we put our trust in money in the bank.”

-Hugh Nibley (“Nibley Talks about Contemporary Issues”, 13)