

## Sunday January 31<sup>st</sup> Fireside

*"The Lord in His mercy has provided a way of escape [from the tribulation to come]. The voice of warning is to all people by the mouths of His servants. If this voice is not heeded, the angels of destruction will increasingly go forth and the chastening hand of the Almighty God will be felt upon the nations as decreed, until the full end thereof will be the result... Wars, devastations and untold sufferings will be our lot except we turn unto the Lord in humble repentance. Destruction even more terrible and far-reaching than attended the last great War will come with certainty, unless rulers and people alike repent and cease their evil and godless ways... My dear brethren and sisters, we must prepare to redeem Zion. It is essentially the sin of pride that kept us from establishing Zion in the days of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was the same sin of pride that brought consecration to an end among the Nephites. Pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. I repeat, pride is the great stumbling block to Zion. We must cleanse the inner vessel by conquering pride. We must yield to the enticings of the Holy Spirit..."*

- President Ezra Taft Benson

### Topic: "Pride/Priestcraft: The Great Stumbling Blocks to Zion"

**"When God says 'pride' what is His definition? What is the difference between 'pride' and being 'puffed up', 'arrogant', 'boastful', etc.? Which is worse and why?"**

President Benson, in his talk, "Beware of Pride" taught: *"The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means "hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition." It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us... Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God's. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of "my will and not thine be done." As Paul said, they "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Philippians 2:21). Our will in competition to God's will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled (see Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:30)."*

The Book of Alma in the Book of Mormon starts off with Nehor, who creates his own religion by following his own spirit, in opposition to the Word of God taught by the prophets. He slays Gideon, who was "an instrument in the hands of God in delivering the people of Limhi out of bondage" and is judged guilty of priestcraft and murder and put to death. I know we're going to discuss the relationship between pride and priestcraft a little later but Nehor's competitiveness with God and His prophets led to his inability to bridle his desires, appetites, and passions, and opened the door to allow *Satan to reign over* many of the people of Nephi, and as we will see, this order of the devil, this opposition to God will cause immeasurable destruction among the people, including those of the church of God.

President Benson distinguishes the difference between pride and being puffed up, arrogant, boastful, etc. He says, "Fear of men's judgment manifests itself in competition for men's approval. The proud love "the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:42-43.) Our motives for the things we do are where the sin is manifest. Jesus said He did "always those things" that pleased God (John 8:29.) Would we not do well to have the pleasing of God as our motive rather than to try to elevate ourselves above our brother and outdo another?"

*Enmity* means "hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition."

**Arrogant** - Assuming; making or having the disposition to make exorbitant claims of rank or estimation; giving one's self an undue degree of importance

**Boastful** -To brag, or vaunt one's self; to make an ostentatious display, in speech, of one's own worth, property, or actions

**Pride** - encompasses all those things, but as Pres. Benson say's, "enmity is at the center of pride and leads to open rebellion."

President Benson in his talk "Beware of Pride" taught:

*"Therefore, no matter how the world uses the term [pride], we must understand how God uses the term so we can understand the language of holy writ and profit thereby (see 2 Nephi 4:15; Mosiah 1:3–7; Alma 5:61)."*

Where the world and the sectarian dogmas focus on the amount, ie. someone being "over-confident" and the things, ie "the car someone drives" the Lord focuses on the where and the why.

President Benson in his talk "Beware of Pride" went on:

*"Most of us think of pride as self-centeredness, conceit, boastfulness, arrogance, or haughtiness. All of these are elements of the sin, but the heart, or core, is still missing."*

A circle is an oval but an oval is not a circle. If one is "prideful" or "proud", chances are they are all those things listed above, if however one has elements of all those things listed above they might not in fact be "proud" or a "prideful person". President Benson continues...

*"The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means "hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition." It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us... Pride is essentially competitive in nature. We pit our will against God's. When we direct our pride toward God, it is in the spirit of "my will and not thine be done." As Paul said, they "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Philippians 2:21). Our will in competition to God's will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled (see Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:30)."*

Once again, the world and sectarians focus on the things when they should be focused on the why. Imagine if we judged Nephi (for example) with the same standards- he lied, stole, and killed a man in the same night! He must have been a very evil and prideful person! He just had to have those gold plates, fancy clothes, and expensive sword! (the "things") According to the world and sectarian viewpoint they would have a point, but when you focus on the why, ie. "Who's will was Nephi following? Why did Nephi do it?" the things, ie. the lying, stealing, and killing are no longer relevant. Pride is following your own will, your own understanding, etc. over that of the Lord's.

President Benson continued:

*"The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see Helaman 12:6). They pit their perceptions of truth against God's great knowledge, their abilities versus God's priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works. Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren't interested in changing their opinions to agree with God's."*

The "authority of God" are the keys of God on Earth. If the keys told me to jump, would I? If the keys told me to get a year supply of food and water would I? If the keys told me to homeschool, would I? If the keys told me to avoid debt like a plague, would I? If the keys told me to get a vaccine, would I? Elder Benson:

*"Pride is a very misunderstood sin, and many are sinning in ignorance (see Mosiah 3:11; 3 Nephi 6:18)."*

Many have piled the debt high, ignored the counsel to get a year supply of food and water, etc. etc. and then they turn around and point the finger at someone else "talking boldly!" or "with confidence!" and accuse them of pride, why? Because "pride is a very misunderstood sin, even in the church, and many are sinning in ignorance" because they don't understand what "pride" is. They are focusing on the things, in this case "the things someone is saying and how they are saying it" vs the why, in this case "why the person is saying it or doing it". We prove every day, in the choices we make to follow the keys' direction or not, whether or not we are "prideful" or "proud. Many

people, for example, will do things they believe to be “right” or “nicer”, etc. despite the Lord telling us to be, live, and do another way- that is pride, regardless of his “kind” or “nice” etc. their presentation was. The way they presented the message doesn’t change the nature of the message, and in most cases these people’s “why”, is tied directly to “priestcraft”, or in the words of Lord “many are called but few are chosen and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men...”

But what about ***the amount*** vs ***the where***? President Benson:

*“If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men’s, we will have self-esteem.”*

The sons of Mosiah made the mistake, judging Ammon for “pride” simply because of ***the amount*** of confidence Ammon displayed, not on ***the where*** Ammon was placing his confidence, or ***the where*** of the source of Ammons confidence. Ammon retorts with the doctrine of Christ Alma 26:

*“But Ammon said unto him: I do not boast in my own strength, nor in my own wisdom; but behold, my joy is full, yea, my heart is brim with joy, and I will rejoice in my God. Yea, I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things...”*

A lot of members would mistake even Ammon’s retort as pride, once again, *because the sin of pride is a sin readily misused and misunderstood*. Ammon’s retort was spot on. If your confidence, ***the where***, is grounded and centered in the Lord’s ability to expand your capabilities to accomplish whatever task the Lord sets you up against, it will not ever be pride.

So in conclusion ***the where*** vs ***the amount*** simply means don’t focus on *the amount* of confidence someone is displaying, focus on *the where* the source of their confidence is being derived from; this will tell you what is pride and what is not pride. ***The why*** vs ***the things*** simply means *the items, the acts, the “how’s”* don’t determine pride, the *“why someone has the items, does the acts, and how they do the acts”* determines if it is pride or not.

So why is being “puffed up” bad but “being prideful” much, much worse? Richard G. Scott taught:

*“The joyful news for anyone who desires to be rid of the consequences of poor choices is that the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He does rebellion. Whereas the Lord warns that unrepented rebellion will bring punishment, when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy.”* (Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, October 2013 General Conference).

Being “puffed up” is a sin of weakness, being “prideful” is a sin of rebellion, in fact, “sins of rebellion” and “sins of pride” are synonymous. (See my paper “Rebellion vs Weakness” and “Pride is Pride”)

## **“What is priestcraft and how does it directly relate to pride?”**

Back to Alma, Nehor “had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people. And he also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life. And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money. And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching.” (Alma 1:3-6)

There are other, maybe even clearer definitions of priestcraft, but Nehor began to practice priestcraft when he “termed” his words to be the word of God. The Lord said to the prophet, Ezekiel, “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say though unto them that prophesy out of their own hears, Hear ye the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!” (Ezekiel 13:1-3). Then he sought to be distinguished as more valuable than others, with less

accountability. We are all guilty of various forms of pride. We are living in an illusion that we have created for ourselves to justify our betrayal of spiritual promptings or actual sin or prejudice or whatever it might be. I have realized that when I don't have the Spirit with me, until I repent, I begin and continue to see the world differently, falsely; when distance grows between me and the Lord, I resort to my own coping mechanisms, my own justifications, my own wisdom. I also start seeing others differently, to justify my shortcomings; to make myself less accountable and them more accountable; I blame. I make up excuses for the chaos around me. I then begin to fear—how I am perceived or recognized because I now need to justify my value (I am forgetting how the Lord views me). What a mess. I think this is all quite natural in our carnal state. Enmity toward God causes a chain reaction. Eventually this independent, personal belief system must be justified by convincing others of the same. “The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam.” (Mosiah 3:19). This is why we need Christ and to make covenants and receive His ordinances under the direction of those holding the keys of the patriarchal order, the new and everlasting covenant. By not adhering to His principles and ordinances, we are under the control of Satan. Pride led Nehor to priestcraft and murder; his teachings fed the pride of others and this satanic order continued. We are just as vulnerable to this path if we do not continually repent and seek His will.

*29 He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.” (2 Nephi 26:29)*

*12 “Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up.” (2 Nephi 28:12)*

#### **I.e. Sherem, Nehor, and Korihor**

2 Nephi 26: 29 “...for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and **set themselves up for a light** unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.”

Alma 1: 16 “Nevertheless, this did not put an end to the spreading of priestcraft through the land; for there were many **who loved the vain things of the world**, and they went forth preaching false doctrines; and this they did **for the sake of riches and honor**.”

Of all the sins of pride, of all the sins of rebellion, the sin of priestcraft sits on the top. Not only does practicing priestcraft obviously make one “called but never chosen” as “their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and [they have] aspired to the honors of men...” these people have attempted to do so by stealing, and selling the Light of Christ, sometimes that was given to them for free, something that is not theirs to give let alone sell. If pride is the great stumbling block to Zion, priestcraft is the largest and most damning stone. Period.

### **“Will/can our own personal revelation ever supersede the direct directions from the prophetic keys? Why not? Can our own personal definitions of priestcraft supersede God’s definitions of it? Why not?”**

I'll start with my observation of the digital revolution and what I believe are sinister, yet innovative revenue building strategies that use algorithms to collect and sequence personal information to quite literally create customized, personal realities that maximize and control human thought. I'm not a tech hater; I see the blessings of it; however, we have generally submitted to a system that promotes an illusion—built on branding psychology, political partisanship, addiction, etc. Because this system was built by trillions of independent ideas and motivations, we have to understand how vulnerable we are to being deceived into more tolerance of sin, more debt, more fear, more pride, more false prophets, more more, more. The world is at our fingertips, literally. Organizations are falling prey to the Church of Satan and the devil's ultimate goal to eradicate agency and enslave God's children. This is another discussion.

Because the disorder of the world is increasing, more quickly every day it seems, the only organization on the face of this beautiful earth, created by the Son under the direction of the Father, that will withstand the chaos that is at

our door, is the Church Jesus Christ—the Church that holds His keys, restored from the Lord Himself through His servants, to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only organization that can exist outside of absolute confusion—because of the keys. Everything else is the Church of the Devil, built on lies and bathed in chaos and destruction. So no, I don't think personal revelation can supersede the keys. I refuse to even start down that path and entertain "possible" personal exceptions to this. Even if rarely true, maybe like a future prophet cutting off someone's head as directed by the Spirit, I know I am safe by following the keys. This is not to say that the Lord cannot help us learn from bad decisions when we repent and turn to him. Priestcraft is more likely broader than our understanding of what qualifies as priestcraft, not narrower.

In Preach My Gospel, chapter 4: How Do I Recognize and Understand the Spirit?

*"God loves you and all His children. He is anxious to support you in your practical and specific challenges. You have been promised inspiration to know what to do and have been given the power to do it (see Doctrine and Covenants 43:15–16). He will help you as you try to recognize and understand the Spirit through diligent scripture study... The Spirit is always available to guide and direct you. However, the Spirit speaks quietly, through your feelings as well as your mind. One great challenge for you and those you work with is to recognize the quiet, subtle promptings of the Holy Ghost... As you pray for inspiration, you should also confirm your feelings. For example, compare your decisions with the scriptures and the teachings of the living prophets. Be certain that the feelings are consistent with the assignment you have; for example, you will not receive revelation to tell a local bishop how he should perform in his calling. Discuss your decisions and conclusions with your companion, your district leader, or your mission president when appropriate. President Howard W. Hunter offered this counsel: "Let me offer a word of caution. ... I think if we are not careful ... we may begin to try to counterfeit the true influence of the Spirit of the Lord by unworthy and manipulative means. I get concerned when it appears that strong emotion or free-flowing tears are equated with the presence of the Spirit. Certainly the Spirit of the Lord can bring strong emotional feelings, including tears, but that outward manifestation ought not to be confused with the presence of the Spirit itself" (The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter [1997], 184). **The Spirit of the Lord always edifies.** Revelation and spiritual experiences are sacred. They should be kept private and discussed only in appropriate situations. As a missionary, you may be more aware of spiritual experiences than you have been earlier in your life. Resist the temptation to talk freely about these experiences. President Boyd K. Packer counseled: "I have learned that strong, impressive spiritual experiences do not come to us very frequently. And when they do, they are generally for our own edification, instruction, or correction. Unless we are called by proper authority to do so, they do not position us to counsel or to correct others. "I have come to believe also that it is not wise to continually talk of unusual spiritual experiences. They are to be guarded with care and shared only when the Spirit itself prompts you to use them to the blessing of others" ("The Candle of the Lord," 53)."*

President Joseph Fielding Smith taught,

*"Our right to guidance from Holy Ghost. We have the right to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, but we cannot have that guidance, if we wilfully refuse to consider the revelations that have been given to help us to understand and to guide us in the light and truth of the everlasting gospel. We cannot hope to have that guidance when we refuse to consider these great revelations which mean so much to us both temporally and spiritually.*

*Now if we find ourselves in this condition of unbelief or unwillingness to seek for the light and the knowledge which the Lord has placed within our reach, then we are liable or in danger of being deceived by evil spirits, the doctrines of devils, and the teachings of men. And when these false influences are presented before us, we will not have the distinguishing understanding by which we can segregate them and know that they are not of the Lord. And so we may become prey unto the ungodly, to the vicious, to the cunning, to the craftiness of men." (Doctrines of Salvation, p.43)*

Simply put no. It doesn't matter how much we kick and scream and gnash our teeth, the doctrine won't change. Pride is pride; Priestcraft is priestcraft. Any attempt to justify pride or priestcraft with "personal spiritual revelation"



without the keys to do so or qualify for is dangerous and damning. You will not receive answers to prayers that supersede the direct direction of the keys. Joseph Smith directly taught that “no man will receive revelation for that man above him in the Kingdom of God” and the Lord himself constantly reminds us as Saints that “My house is an house of order, saith the Lord”.

## **“What makes priestcraft and pride so damning? What makes those sins such powerful antagonists to establishing Zion and building New Jerusalem?”**

Back to President Benson on pride, “*Our will in competition to God’s will allows desires, appetites, and passions to go unbridled (see Alma 38:12; 3 Nephi 12:30).*” And back to Nehor and the desires, appetites, and passions that he failed to bridle, which led him to murder Gideon; not to mention the satanic order that blossomed under Amlici and his insurrection four years later. In February 1979, R. Quinn Gardner, who was the managing director of the Church Welfare Services Department laid out six principles to becoming a Zion Society: Love, Service, Work, Self-reliance, Consecration, and Stewardship. All six of these would be stifled by priestcraft and pride.

“Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man... It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition has gone, pride has gone.” - C. S. Lewis

*12 “Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up.*

*13 They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up.*

*14 They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men.” (2 Nephi 28: 12-14)*

On the flip side look at what the people of the City of Enoch accomplished, “*And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.*” (Moses 7:18)

I went over this above, but it is so important I’ll read it again, Richard G. Scott taught:

“*The joyful news for anyone who desires to be rid of the consequences of poor choices is that the Lord sees weaknesses differently than He does rebellion. Whereas the Lord warns that unrepented rebellion will bring punishment, when the Lord speaks of weaknesses, it is always with mercy.*” (Personal Strength through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, October 2013 General Conference).

Priestcraft sits on the top of sins of rebellion- it is a sin of rebellion of the worst order and should be shunned as such, as the prophets in The Book of Mormon constantly warned us to.

The Lord Himself answers the rest of that question in Doctrine and Covenants chapter 105: 1-6

“*Verily I say unto you who have assembled yourselves together that you may learn my will concerning the redemption of mine afflicted people—Behold, I say unto you, were it not for the transgressions of my people, speaking concerning the church and not individuals, they might have been redeemed even now. But behold, they have not learned to be obedient to the things which I required at their hands, but are full of all manner of evil, and do not impart of their substance, as cometh saints, to the poor and afflicted among them; And are not united according to the union required by the law of the celestial kingdom; And Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the*

*principles of the law of the celestial kingdom; otherwise I cannot receive her unto myself. And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer.”*

**“Is there a correlation between those practicing priestcraft and those actively teaching that we as a church don’t need to redeem and build Zion, the New Jerusalem? Why does that correlation exist? What other examples of similar correlations exist between behavior and sins?”**

Pride by definition distances us from God. Priestcraft cannot tolerate equality. Equality is a prerequisite for Zion. It can only be achieved the Lord’s way, through consecration and sacrifice. Mormon describes Zion, that all persons in the community “imparting to one another both temporally and spiritually according to their needs and their wants” (Mosiah 18:29). The concept of equality begins with the fundamental principle: we are all children of Heavenly Father, and we may all become “the children of Christ” (4 Nephi 1:17). Nephi taught that “all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33). The Apostle Peter explained that “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). In 3 Nephi, Mormon again assesses the causes of wickedness in Nephite society and makes a similar diagnosis. “Now the cause of this iniquity of the people was this—Satan had great power, unto the stirring up of the people to do all manner of iniquity, and to the puffing them up with pride, tempting them to seek for power, and authority, and riches, and the vain things of the world” (3 Nephi 6:15). President Kimball taught, “The enemies of faith know no God but force, no devotion but the use of force.” (Kimball, “Seeking Eternal Riches,” 107; see also DC 121:39). I don’t think there’s any pretending or manipulating in Zion, the New Jerusalem.

3 Nephi 6:12 “And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.”

In Alma 1:4 it reads “*And he (Nehor) also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.*” Now reading that passage and think it sounds correct, but think about how he is twisting the great plan of the eternal God! (See 2 Nephi 28:7-8) How, would you live differently if you followed Nehor’s logic?

Prophet Brigham Young further explained how this pride and priestcraft relates back to building up Zion and New Jerusalem:

*“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.... Do we know and understand that it is our business to build up Zion? To have seen the way this people have conducted themselves in years past, one would not have had the least idea that such was our business; but it made no difference whom we built cities for; many would build for Jew or Gentile, Greek, Mahomedan, or Pagan, every class of men on the earth, as readily, apparently, as they would build up Zion. Yet the word of the Lord to us is to build up Zion and her cities and stakes. Lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes, O ye House of Israel; add to her beauty and add to her strength! Why, to have seen the conduct of the people you might have supposed they knew no more about Zion than about a city of the Chinese, or a city in France, Italy, Germany, or Asia; just as soon build up a city in Asia or Africa as anywhere else, "no matter whom we build for if we only get the dollar, only get our pay for our work." Yet the commandment of God to us is to build up Zion and her cities. I told you here last Sunday what Joseph said in this respect—what we should build and what we should not build up. This book [the book of Doctrine and Covenants] is full of it. We say we believe Joseph was a prophet, that he had the priesthood and was called of God to gather the people together and establish Zion. If we believe this, why not let our lives prove that we believe the doctrine that we profess? Can you see any of the Christians in the world who do not believe the doctrine they profess? It is a very dark picture to look upon—a sad affair that we disbelieve our own doctrines. Let us remember them and live accordingly.* (Brigham Young, February 10 1867, Journal of Discourses, 11:324)

In the parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees found in Doctrine and Covenants chapter 101 we read:

*“And while they were yet laying the foundation thereof, they began to say among themselves: And what need hath my lord of this tower? And consulted for a long time, saying among themselves: What need hath my lord of this tower, seeing this is a time of peace? Might not this money be given to the exchangers? For there is no need of these things. And while they were at variance one with another they became very slothful, and they hearkened not unto the commandments of their lord. And the enemy came by night, and broke down the hedge; and the servants of the nobleman arose and were affrighted, and fled; and the enemy destroyed their works, and broke down the olive trees.”*

1. People began to preach against the NEED of the redemption of Zion and the building of New Jerusalem
2. The reason for this was their love of money, ie. “priestcraft/pride” were the reasons for this change in preaching
3. This variance in doctrine caused the people “to become slothful”, meaning that the preaching against the need for the redemption of Zion and the building of New Jerusalem actually caused people to become slothful. When they lost sight of the goal, when they started to believe that lie, it gave them the excuse to become complacent and slothful. It directly caused it.
4. This failure to redeem Zion and build New Jerusalem will ultimately cause the damage to the olive trees, damage we are seeing today

Thus we learn that the active preaching against the needed redemption of Zion and building of New Jerusalem not only caused people to become slothful and wicked, it is what brought about the Assyrian(s) and the damage, ie. as the Lord said *“my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer”*

Yes, this process of justifying sin leads to the same types of related consequences. We learn in Doctrine and Covenants 63: 16 *“And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear.”*

When one commits sin and they know they are committing sin, ie. “sins of rebellion, sins of pride, sins of priestcraft”, and they have no desire to change, or as President Benson explains (which I’ve already quotes above):

*“The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with*



God's”

So when one does these sins and refuses to change, they first attempt to A) wrench God's words into agreeing with them, and when that ultimately fails (for it always does) they then B) deny the faith, ie “this is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled! But woe unto such, for their promises lurketh beneath and not from above”. Those practicing priestcraft do so to justify themselves, not the Lord, and when that fails they will deny the faith. Justify one selves comes in many forms, sins of omission and sins of commission; I don't want to do \_\_\_\_\_ so I will preach that it is not required or I am currently doing \_\_\_\_\_ and I don't want to change so I will preach that it is okay. This pattern plays out again, and again, and again.

## **“What can we do to ‘cleans the inner vessel’ and conquer pride/priestcraft? What is THE promised blessing associated with that as well as the remedy FOR pride/priestcraft?”**

Back to Alma, post Nehor, Amilici, the resulting death and carnage that resulted from pride and priestcraft, Alma's leadership as the High Priest and the church's wonderful reconciliation with God, then in the eighth year of the reign of the judges, iniquity enters the church of God as the people “began to wax proud”. (Alma 4:6) In this eighth year of the reign of the judges, there began to be contentions among the people of the church; yea, there were envyings, and strife, and malice, and persecutions, and pride, even to exceed the pride of those who did not belong to the church of God. And thus ended the eighth year of the reign of the judges; and the wickedness of the church was a great stumbling-block to those who did not belong to the church; and thus the church began to fail in its progress. (Alma 4:9-10). In the commencement of the ninth year, Alma saw the wickedness of the church, and he saw also that the example of the church began to lead those who were unbelievers on from one piece of iniquity to another, thus bringing on the destruction of the people. Yea, he saw great inequality among the people, some lifting themselves up with their pride, despising others, turning their backs upon the needy and the naked and those who were hungry, and those who were athirst, and those who were sick and afflicted. Alma, having seen the afflictions of the humble followers of God, and the persecutions which were heaped upon them by the remainder of his people, and seeing all their inequality, began to be very sorrowful; nevertheless the Spirit of the Lord did not fail him. Alma appointed Nephihah to be chief judge. Alma retained the office of high priest and did “go forth among his people, or among the people of Nephi, that he might preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no way that he might reclaim them save it were in bearing down in pure testimony against them.

Alma 5 is a wonderful sermon on how we clean the inner vessel and the blessings associated.

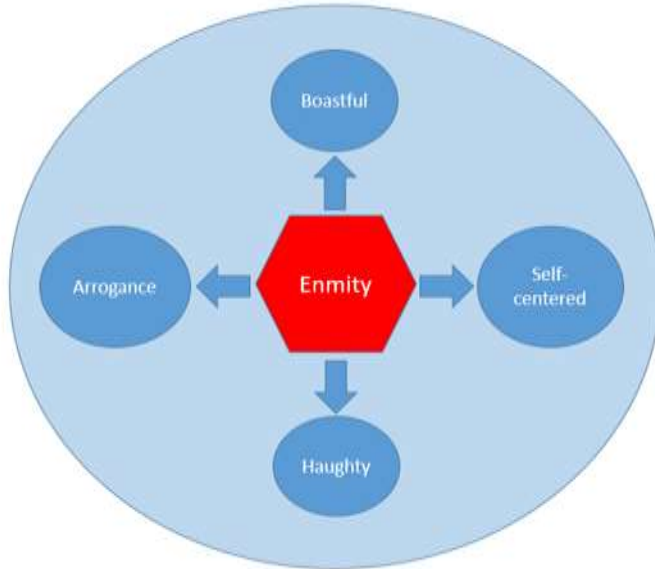
Moses never entered the Promised Land. Joseph Smith never saw Zion redeemed. Some of us may not live long enough to see the day when the Book of Mormon floods the earth and when the Lord lifts His condemnation. (See [D&C 84:54–58](#).) But, God willing, I (and so should all of us) intend to spend all our remaining days in that glorious effort.

Pres. Benson taught that humility is the antidote to pride.

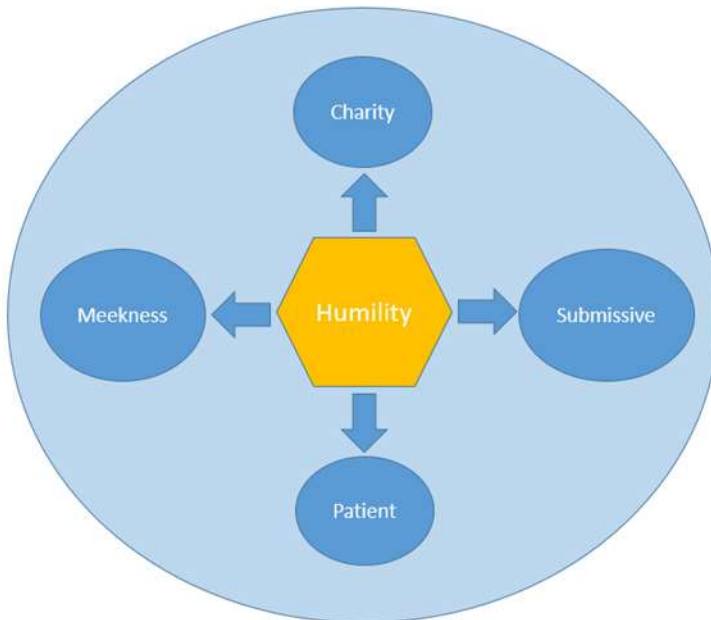
Having such humility allows us to submit our will to God's will:

**19** For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (Mosiah 3:19)

### "The Pride Bubble"



Burst or pop that pride bubble, through humility and the Atonement of Jesus Christ!



2 Nephi 26: 29-31

*"He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion. Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity 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. But the laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish.”*

I would **HIGHLY** recommend reading “Cleansing the Inner Vessel: The Process of Repentance By Larry Tippetts found on the church’s website: <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1992/10/cleansing-the-inner-vessel-the-process-of-repentance?lang=eng>

But let me quote the first few paragraphs:

*“As I read the scriptures, I often reflect upon the chilling implications of what the Apostle Peter meant when he said, “Judgment must begin at the house of God.” (1 Pet. 4:17.) In our own day, the Lord has said, “Vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth. ... And upon my house shall it begin.” (D&C 112:24–25; italics added.) What kind of judgments does the Lord have in mind? Why do the scriptures say that the cleansing will begin with the Church, rather than with the wicked?*

*The scriptures reveal that the Lord will save his greatest wrath and condemnation for those who outwardly appear religious but who are actually full of evil within. Speaking to Jewish religious leaders, the Savior said, “Cleanse first that which is within the cup. ... Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.” (Matt. 23:26–27.) Similarly, the great Book of Mormon leader, Moroni, wrote, “God has said that the inward vessel shall be cleansed first.” (Alma 60:23.)*

*President Ezra Taft Benson left little room for doubt that these warnings apply to us. He declared, “All is not well in Zion. ... We must cleanse the inner vessel, beginning first with ourselves, then with our families, and finally with the Church.” (Ensign, May 1986, p. 4.)*

*There are two methods of cleansing the inner vessel. The first is repentance. But if we do not repent, the Lord will invoke the second method of cleansing—from without. One way or another, the vessel will be cleansed.*

*President Benson has made it clear that cleansing the inner vessel requires repentance: “My beloved brothers and sisters, as we cleanse the inner vessel, there will have to be changes made in our own personal lives, in our families, and in the Church. The proud do not change to improve, but defend their position by rationalizing. Repentance means change, and it takes a humble person to change. But we can do it.” (Ensign, May 1986, p. 7.)”*

Brothers and sisters my prayer is that we as Saint can begin to “let God prevail” in our lives and then learn to “prevail with God”. Pride and it’s nasty sister priestcraft are the twin horns on the devil preventing us from ever “letting God prevail” in our lives. Brothers and sisters, may we let go of our own pride and cling to Christ for all our understanding, knowledge, power, and deliverance. May we let go of priestcraft, and seek with all of our hearts, minds, bodies, and souls to build up the Kingdom of God, as we promised to do so in the Holy Temples of the Lord, so that we may be found worthy, and selected to redeem Zion and take part in the building of that beautiful city The New Jerusalem is my prayer and commitment to all of us in the name of Jesus Christ amen.