

Fireside: September 4 2021 (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith) v1.01

Letter to Editor Seaton p.13-14

January 4, 1833, the Prophet wrote to Mr. N. E. Seaton, an editor of a newspaper, the following words of counsel and warning concerning the state of the world and the purpose of the Lord in the restoration spoken of by the ancient prophets.

Kirtland, January 4th, 1833.

Mr. Editor:--Sir, Considering the liberal principles upon which your interesting and valuable paper is published, myself being a subscriber, and feeling a deep interest in the cause of Zion, and in the happiness of my brethren of mankind, I cheerfully take up my pen to contribute my mite at this very interesting and important period.

For some length of time I have been carefully viewing the state of things, as it now appears, throughout our Christian land; and have looked at it with feelings of the most painful anxiety. While upon one hand I behold the manifest withdrawal of God's Holy Spirit, and the veil of stupidity which seems to be drawn over the hearts of the people; upon the other hand, I behold the judgments of God that have swept, and are still sweeping hundreds and thousands of our race, and I fear unprepared, down to the shades of death. With this solemn and alarming fact before me, I am led to exclaim, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night."

Ammon's Thoughts:

I am always impressed with Joseph's ability to work through his own weaknesses. Here is a man with very little formal education; someone who even Oliver Cowdery questioned the Lord over using for the translation of ancient scripture, writing an eloquent letter to the editor of Newspaper. He is an inspiration – We can do hard things through Christ.

How often have we had the opportunity to voice our concerns over the state of unbelief in the world and not done so? How often should we have taken up our 'muskets' (as Elder Holland stated in his recent talk to faculty at BYU) in defence of the faith and not done so? Whether it be defending our faith on social media, during a discussion with friends or in being proactive by writing to local leaders regarding political/social issues. Judging by how often in my life I have had to stand alone, even with good people around that ought to stand in defence of truth, I can tell you... NOT ENOUGH! Edmund Burke, one of the foremost political speakers of 18th century England, said: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

The withdrawal of the Holy Ghost causes a 'Veil of Stupidity' to fall over us. Truth is compared often in the Gospel to 'Light' and intelligence. An increase of light brightens a room in the same way that Truth enlightens the mind.

David A. Bednar in his talk 'The Spirit of Revelation' shared two great examples regarding Light that I would like us to consider:

I invite you to consider two experiences most of us have had with light.

The first experience occurred as we entered a dark room and turned on a light switch. Remember how in an instant a bright flood of illumination filled the room and caused the darkness to disappear. What previously had been unseen and uncertain became clear and recognizable. This experience was characterized by immediate and intense recognition of light.

The second experience took place as we watched night turn into morning. Do you recall the slow and almost imperceptible increase in light on the horizon? In contrast to turning on a light in a dark room, the light from the rising sun did not immediately burst forth. Rather, gradually and steadily the intensity of the light increased, and the darkness of night was replaced by the radiance of morning. Eventually, the sun did dawn over the skyline. But the visual evidence of the sun's impending arrival was apparent hours before the sun actually appeared over the horizon. This experience was characterized by subtle and gradual discernment of light.

Elder Bednar used these examples to demonstrate how the Spirit of Revelation can work through the Holy Ghost. I want to point out that the same pattern is true in reverse! Just as a light switch can instantly reveal things with clarity, it can just as easily be switched off and immediately leave us completely blinded. Also, if the light of the Holy Ghost removes itself from us due to unbelief and/sin it is as if the very light before our eyes begins to slowly dim over time until it is gone.

The Brother of Jared was chastised by the Lord for forgetting to call upon him:

Ether 2:15 And the brother of Jared repented of the evil which he had done, and did call upon the name of the Lord for his brethren who were with him. And the Lord said unto him: I will forgive thee and thy brethren of their sins; but thou shalt not sin any more, for **ye shall remember that my Spirit will not always strive with man**; wherefore, if ye will sin until ye are fully ripe ye shall be cut off from the presence of the Lord. And these are my thoughts upon the land which I shall give you for your inheritance; for it shall be a land choice above all other lands.

When the Spirit leaves it is replaced by a 'Veil of Stupidity'. We actually lose intelligence as we are distanced from the Holy Ghost. I have seen this so often in my own life – When I am closer the Lord by *seeking* obedience, I learn and understand at a far greater capacity. I'm sure you have experienced that in your own life. How often have we seen this in friends or family? As they distance themselves from God and the Spirit, we see a veil of stupidity fall over them and their ability to comprehend truth diminishes and as Joseph explains, leads them 'down to the shades of death.'

Let's keep the light of truth and understanding on!

Topher's Thoughts:

So, firstly what I love about the TPJS is this extra glimpse into Josephs Smith's personality. He was so brave and bold and yet so charming and likeable which is quite a hard line to tread. At first I was wondering why this letter was so short and though maybe this is why he called it his "Mite". But I looked it up and found the entire letter in the Joseph Smith Papers and its absolute banger! This letter is where the famous quote comes from that says "And now I am prepared to say by the authority of Jesus Christ, that not many years shall pass away before the United States shall present such a scene of bloodshed as has not a parallel in the history of our nation; pestilence, hail, famine, and earthquake will sweep the wicked of this generation from off the face of the land, to open and prepare the way for the return of the lost tribes of Israel from the north country...". It turns out the letter is quite long and we could write paper after paper about it so I'll just focus on the portion we are dealing with here.

Joseph called America "Our Christian Land." It is interesting to think that in Josephs time America actually was a Christian Land. America was founded by Christians on Christian principles and almost everybody was Christian of some denomination or another (yes that is a generalization, but it was a time of Christian religious revival – if anyone has more accurate data – comment). Look at us 200 years later – religion is on a steady decline as liberalism and political correctness rise almost exponentially. I love and find it hilarious that Joseph described this back then as "the veil of stupidity". I just imagine how he would describe our current day. If you've seen our "Unhinged" video about President Nelson's "Hinge point" statement you might remember us

talking about the similarity of the Book of Mormon to our time and how it was always a pattern of a time period of 200 years for society to completely change and degrade. It's been 200 years since the First Vision. Since the time that God chose to restore truth to the earth. Since that time the church has grown to fill the earth whilst as Nephi described it "their dominions upon the face of the earth were small, because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw". Look at us now. We live in a world where it is essentially Politically incorrect to state that abortion is evil or that homosexuality is a sin... The world is upside-down and surely ripe for gods Judgements. Particularly in America which is God's chosen land for his covenant people.

2 Nephi 10:19

19 Wherefore, I will consecrate this land unto thy seed, and them who shall be numbered among thy seed, forever, for the land of their inheritance; for it is a choice land, saith God unto me, above all other lands, wherefore **I will have all men that dwell thereon that they shall worship me, saith God.**

Ether 2:9

9 And now, we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise; and whatsoever nation shall possess it shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fulness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fulness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are **ripened** in iniquity.

The Footnote for "**Ripened**" leads to **1 Nephi 14:6**:

6 Therefore, wo be unto the Gentiles if it so be that they **harden their hearts against the Lamb of God.**

Has America hardened its hearts? The majority has. Are we ready to see America be swept?

Joseph Smith in the last part of the Letter talks about wanting to "weep day and night" because God's judgements are sweeping hundreds and thousands down to the shades of death. But why exactly is he "weeping"? Because they are "**unprepared**". Are we prepared?

Full transcript: <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-noah-c-saxton-4-january-1833/1#full-transcript>

Micah's Thoughts:

2 Nephi 26 is the key to understanding all of this. Zion escaping, its scourging, the spirit of the Lord ceasing to strive with men and the veil of stupidity etc. It is the key to the whole subject. Nephi starts by giving a prophetic view of the buildup to the coming of Jesus Christ to the Nephites and Lamanites. This is important to cover because of how similar the buildup to the Savior's coming to the Nephites in Ancient America to the coming of the Savior in our day to A-O-A and the New Jerusalem.

2 Nephi 26:3-6

3 And after the Messiah shall come there shall be signs given unto my people of his birth, and also of his death and resurrection; and great and terrible shall that day be unto the wicked, for they shall perish; and they perish **because** they cast out the prophets, and the saints, and stone them, and slay them; wherefore the cry of the blood of the saints shall ascend up to God from the ground against them.

4 Wherefore, all those who are proud, and that do wickedly, the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, for they shall be as stubble.

5 And they that kill the prophets, and the saints, the depths of the earth shall swallow them up, saith the Lord of Hosts; and mountains shall cover them, and whirlwinds shall carry them away, and buildings shall fall upon them and crush them to pieces and grind them to powder.

6 And they shall be visited with thunderings, and lightnings, and earthquakes, and all manner of destructions, for the fire of the anger of the Lord shall be kindled against them, and they shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall consume them, saith the Lord of Hosts.

So a basic rundown of the points of reference here are:

1. The people reject the prophets and the Saints and stone them and slay them
2. The blood of the Saints cry from the ground
3. The people are visited with thunders and lightnings and earthquakes etc.

So what about our parallel to our day?

Revelation 6:9-10

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

So here we have the blood of the Saints crying from the ground

Revelation 6:12-14

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

14 And the heavens opened as a scroll is opened when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

D&C 88:87-90

87 For not many days hence and the earth shall tremble and reel to and fro as a drunken man; and the sun shall hide his face, and shall refuse to give light; and the moon shall be bathed in blood; and the stars shall become exceedingly angry, and shall cast themselves down as a fig that falleth from off a fig tree.

88 And after your testimony cometh wrath and indignation upon the people.

89 For after your testimony cometh the testimony of earthquakes, that shall cause groanings in the midst of her, and men shall fall upon the ground and shall not be able to stand.

90 And also cometh the testimony of the voice of thunderings, and the voice of lightnings, and the voice of tempests, and the voice of the waves of the sea heaving themselves beyond their bounds.

And here we have the people are visited with thunder, lightning, earthquake etc.

So we have the parallels from when Jesus visited the Nephites to when Jesus will visit us in the Americas, but we are missing point #1, people rejecting the prophets, people stoning and slaying them, the veil of stupidity etc.

2 Nephi 26:7-9

7 O the pain, and the anguish of my soul for the loss of the slain of my people! For I, Nephi, have seen it, and it well nigh consumeth me before the presence of the Lord; but I must cry unto my God: Thy ways are just.

8 But behold, *the righteous that hearken unto the words of the prophets, and destroy them not*, but look forward unto Christ with steadfastness for the signs which are given, notwithstanding all persecution—behold, they are they which shall not perish.

9 But the Son of Righteousness shall appear unto them; and he shall heal them, and they shall have peace with him,...

So what is the great divide here? Those who follow the prophet vs those who follow him not. The next question would be why did they not heed the prophets?

2 Nephi 26:10-11

10 And when [they have rejected the prophets] a speedy destruction cometh unto my people; for, notwithstanding the pains of my soul, I have seen it; wherefore, I know that it shall come to pass; and *they sell themselves for naught*; for, for the reward of their pride and their foolishness they shall reap destruction; for because they yield unto the devil and choose works of darkness rather than light, therefore they must go down to hell.

11 For the Spirit of the Lord will not always strive with man. And when the Spirit ceaseth to strive with man then cometh speedy destruction, and this grieveth my soul.

So what causes people to harden their hearts against the prophets or to have the veil of unbelief or as Joseph Smith put it, the veil of stupidity, come upon them? Priestcraft. Selling themselves for naught. And when that happens the Spirit of the Lord ceases to strive with people. A veil of unbelief or stupidity falls upon their minds and “behold, ere, they are aware, they are left unto themselves to kick against the pricks, to persecute the Saints and to fight against God.” (D&C 121:38)

2 Nephi 26:14, 19

14 But behold, I prophesy unto you concerning the last days; concerning the days when the Lord God shall bring these things forth unto the children of men.

19 And it shall come to pass, that those who have dwindled in unbelief shall be smitten [and scourged] by the hand of the Gentiles.

So Nephi sees what happens to his people and then begins to immediately relate it to us in the last days, and the most important thing would be for him to try to get us to not dwindle in unbelief and reject the prophets. So he clarifies beyond any reasonable doubt what causes the unbelief, what causes the veil of stupidity and ultimately the rejection of the prophets- and I would add here and the rejection of such prophets is what will bring about the scourging by the Gentiles.

2 Nephi 26:20-22,25-31

20 And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor.

21 And there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice.

22 And there are also secret combinations, even as in times of old, according to the combinations of the devil, for he is the founder of all these things; yea, the founder of murder, and works of darkness; yea, and he leadeth them by the neck with a flaxen cord, until he bindeth them with his strong cords forever.

25 Behold, doth [the Lord] cry unto any, saying: Depart from me? Behold, I say unto you, Nay; but he saith: Come unto me all ye ends of the earth, buy milk and honey, without money and without price.

26 Behold, hath he commanded any that they should depart out of the synagogues, or out of the houses of worship? Behold, I say unto you, Nay.

27 Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance.

28 Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden.

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.

30 Behold, the Lord hath forbidden this thing; wherefore, the Lord God hath given a commandment that all men should have charity, which charity is love. 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 laborer in Zion shall labor for Zion; for if they labor for money they shall perish.

This is where we are right now. President Nelson told us that we would live to see what Nephi only saw in vision, that we are the very people that Nephi saw in vision. He wasn't wrong. The veil of stupidity or the veil of unbelief is a topic that ties directly into this same topic- if you are curious about learning more about it and the importance of rending the veil of unbelief see my paper Faith As the Brother of Jared or the fireside from February 14 2021.

Parting the Veil Through Perfect Faith p.8-9

Brother Joseph Smith, Jr. said: We have assembled together to do the business of the Lord and it is through the great mercy of our God that we are spared to assemble together, many of us have gone at the command of the Lord in defiance of everything evil, and obtained blessings unspeakable, in consequence of which our names are sealed in the Lamb's book of life, for the Lord has spoken it. It is the privilege of every Elder to speak of the things of God; and could we all come together with one heart and one mind in perfect faith the veil might as well be rent today as next week, or any other time, and if we will but cleanse ourselves and covenant before God, to serve Him, it is our privilege to have an assurance that God will protect us at all times.⁴ --FWR, pp. 13-14. (Oct. 25, 1831.)

Ammon's Thoughts:

I think this is a beautiful answer to the question: "If this is the Lord's work and Church, then why is it so hard?"

Because we are in defiance of everything evil! And where are we seeing evil in these times? Literally everywhere and in almost everything this world offers us. So in trying to defy evil, we are in a constant battle with the World around us. From what we watch, hear, participate in, learn or associate with. Everything is a struggle and everything will be a struggle for those seeking to follow the narrow way that leads to Eternal Life. That is hard!!!

Joseph goes on to explain the reward for those that defy evil and stay on the path that – “our names are sealed in the Lamb's book of life, for the Lord has spoken it.”

So what is the ‘Book of Life’? Alma, the High Priest over the Nephites explained that the righteous must separate themselves from the wicked so they would not be counted equally when receiving their inheritance:

Alma 5:57-58

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;

For the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of life, and unto them will I grant an inheritance at my right hand.

I work toward parting the veil of unbelief by choosing to follow Christ in all my choices, regardless of how difficult they may be. There are so many moments in my life where I have chosen to follow the Lord through trials and difficult times. In a way that a son would speak to a father, I often remind him – “Hey... I could have chosen the easy road on this, but instead chose your narrow road! Don’t forget about me!” As if to ask the Father to write my name in the book of life. No matter what I say to another living person about the choices I have made or how hard I have tried to follow the Lord, only he truly knows and understands.

A line I have always trusted in and known to be true from my patriarchal blessing confirms this:

“Ammon, Heavenly Father is also aware of those secret desires you have in your heart, those desires which are righteous and honourable. He blesses you that those desires shall come to pass if you stay close to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, keep the commandments and the covenants you have made or will make and stay within the precepts and principles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.”

Surrendering my will to the Father has always blessed my life as he knows the secret desires of my heart and will grant them unto me according to my righteousness and obedience to Him. These moments strengthen my faith and part the veil of unbelief as I journey toward ‘Perfect Faith’.

Topher’s Thoughts:

With the greatest trials come the greatest blessings. Joseph said “many of us have gone at the command of the Lord in defiance of everything evil, and obtained blessings unspeakable, in consequence of which our names are sealed in the Lamb's book of life”. I don’t know if I’m sure enough to state that this is having your “Calling and Election made sure” but it sure sounds like it to me. Having your calling and election made sure is like the Lord telling you that your name is in the book and Joseph says that their names are sealed in the book. If its not the same thing it is at least very close or a required step on that path. The Doctrine and Covenants Section 88 says this is receiving the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the promise of Eternal Life, even the glory of the Celestial Kingdom. That sure sounds to me like having your calling and election made sure. Are we strong enough? Are we prepared enough? To obtain “blessings unspeakable” for ourselves are we willing to go “at the command of the Lord in defiance of everything evil”? I really hope so because I feel like this will be the test, the test, the test that stands before us all very soon.

Joseph Smith said - “After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to **serve Him at all hazards**, then the man will find his calling and

his **election made sure.**" (Teachings, p. 150.) Prepare yourself now to "serve him at all hazards". Make the decision now. Don't wait for the hazard to decide.

President Ezra Taft Benson said – "Every generation has its tests and its chance to stand and prove itself. Would you like to know of one of our toughest tests? Hear the warning words of President Brigham Young, "The worst fear I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church and go to hell. **This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty and all manner of persecution and be true. But my greatest fear is that they cannot stand wealth.**" This is the pride cycle we see repeated over and over in the Book of Mormon (Gee I wonder why Mormon included that in there?) and we are at the peak of the pride cycle now. Years and years of unprecedented wealth and prosperity have led to this. What comes next?

Lastly, I love how he said, "could we all come together with one heart and one mind in perfect faith the veil might as well be rent today as next week". This is Zion. This is the Zion mindset which I know we all want, and all crave. I can't wait to "come together in one heart and one mind in perfect faith" and rend the veil with all you my friends! Zion or Bust!

Micah's Thoughts:

A lot of what I want to say about this I said or built up to in the last quote. The only way a family is united is when they unite behind the father. The only way a society unites is when they unite behind the keys. As we are united thus we are united to Christ and we are one and this is the only way that we will have an assurance to escape and be protected. The last thing that I would like to say here is that I've always harped about committing, committing, committing, but I find that I failed to commit this group and all those under the sound of my voice to the mantra that will guarantee that deliverance and that defense. The covenant people of the Lord, if they become united and covenant with the Lord they could rend the veil of unbelief at any time from Joseph Smith to today (D&C 105:2). So that is my commitment now, will everyone in this group under the sound of my voice make a covenant with our God "Zion or bust"- that there is nothing too large or too small that the Lord can ask us to do either by His own mouth or the mouth of the keys it is the same, but that we will do it. Zion or bust. Will we covenant to be united with our fellow brothers and sisters and be one with them, pray for them, fast for them, see that there is no suffering or poor among us, Zion or bust. I know that Joseph Smith is our prophet of the Lord and what he said here was the truth, if we as a people make this covenant with the Lord we could just as easily rend that veil today.

Perfect Love a Safeguard Against Falling from Grace p.9

Brother Joseph Smith, Jr. said: That he intended to do his duty before the Lord and hoped that the brethren would be patient as they had a considerable distance (to go). Also said that the promise of God was that the greatest blessings which God had to bestow should be given to those who contributed to the support of his family while he was translating the fulness of the scriptures. Until we have perfect love we are liable to fall and when we have a testimony that our names are sealed in the Lamb's book of life we have perfect love and then it is impossible for false Christs to deceive us; also said, that the Lord held the Church bound to provide for families of the absent Elders while proclaiming the gospel; further, that God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the Church. The Lord would cut short his work in righteousness and except the Church receive the fulness of the scriptures that they would yet fail.⁵ --FWR, p. 16. (Oct. 25, 1831.)

Ammon's Thoughts:

I like the line about the greatest blessings coming to those who supported Joseph's family when he needed it most. The highest form of love a person can show to another, is to put their needs before your own. This is perfect love. This is what grounds and safeguards us from falling from the Grace of God.

In the lowest points of my life. This is why love grows stronger over the years with a spouse through the trials and hard times you experience together. Every time Aimy and I face a problem, we always say to each other "As long as I have you on my team we will get through this together". As you constantly put the needs of your spouse and family above your own, your relationship grows and deepens.

I have never felt more love for someone than in the moments that I have been in most need. I have seen others share this love with me many times over the years. Years ago our home burnt down and we were left with nothing. A friend in our ward named Raymond Frew was the greatest example of this love. Raymond lost both his legs due to an infection and was confined to a wheelchair, yet he was always the first person to put his hand up for any opportunity to help another. When he found out our house had burned down he took me aside and told me forcefully in his thick Scottish accent "You tell me when and I will be over to paint your house. I can still paint!" A few short years later he passed away and I had the privilege of helping prepare his body for burial. I was grateful I had the opportunity to serve him and I know that his love safeguarded him against falling from Grace and that he had faithfully finished his mission on Earth. He was an example of the Saviours love that I will never forget.

Moroni 7:47

But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

Topher's Thoughts:

The Lamb's book of life again! So "until we have perfect love we are **liable to fall** and when we have a testimony that our names are sealed in the Lamb's book of life we have perfect love and then it is **impossible for false Christs to deceive us**". So, its interesting that having "perfect love" is synonymous with having your calling and election made sure. Dieter F. Uchtdorf said "My beloved friends, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if we ever find ourselves living in fear or anxiety, or if we ever find that our own words, attitudes, or actions are causing fear in others, I pray with all the strength of my soul that we may become liberated from this fear by the divinely appointed antidote to fear: the pure love of Christ, for "perfect love casteth out fear." Christ's perfect love overcomes temptations to harm, coerce, bully, or oppress. Christ's perfect love allows us to walk with humility, dignity, and a bold confidence as followers of our beloved Savior. Christ's perfect love gives us the confidence to press through our fears and place our complete trust in the power and goodness of our Heavenly Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ." (Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear - GC April 2017)

So, if our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, we have perfect love and cannot fall or be deceived. Perfect love is the Pure Love of Christ. So, we should be on the constant path of striving to become like Jesus until we actually attain it.

Micah's Thoughts:

This obviously ties back to the original two quotes, as Nephi taught us, priestcraft leads to apostasy or in other words cutting the thread that binds you to the prophet which then makes you vulnerable to false Christs and as Nephi explained the antidote to priestcraft is charity, perfect love. Joseph Smith here explains that one cannot have perfect charity or perfect love without knowing that their calling and election has been made sure. So obviously one practicing priestcraft will never have this made known unto them. Joseph Smith here says that the heavens are shut up due to priestcraft which makes sense since we have already learned that the opposite of

priestcraft rends the veil of unbelief, but he goes further and says that unless the “Church receives the fulness of the scriptures they will fail” confirming what? That having faith as the Brother of Jared is integral to rending the veil of unbelief. Once again, see the paper Faith as the Brother of Jared or the February 14 2021 fireside.

The Prophet’s Instruction on Various Doctrines p.148-149

Faith comes by hearing the word of god, through the testimony of the servants of God; that testimony is always attended by the Spirit of prophecy and revelation.

Repentance is a thing that cannot be trifled with every day. Daily transgression and daily repentance is not that which is pleasing in the sight of God.

Baptism is a holy ordinance preparatory to the reception of the Holy Ghost; it is the channel and key by which the Holy Ghost will be administered.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, cannot be received through the medium of any other principle than the principle of righteousness, for if the proposals are not complied with, it is of no use, but withdraws.

Tongues were given for the purpose of preaching among those whose language is not understood; as on the day of Pentecost, etc., and it is not necessary for tongues to be taught to the Church particularly, for any man that has the Holy Ghost, can speak of the things of God in his own tongue as well as to speak in another; for faith comes not by signs, but by hearing the word of God.

Ammon’s Thoughts:

If Faith comes by hearing the word of God through the testimony of the servants of God (which it does) then how great is our responsibility to share it! We will not stand blameless before God at the last day if we do not stand up to this responsibility. Regardless of how others receive you, fear God rather than man: D&C 122:9 – “...fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever.”

Regarding repentance – It is the turning away from Sin and becoming like our Saviour. Joseph is trying to explain that we cannot repent without demonstrating by our works that we have done away with sin. If we are repenting of the same sins on a daily basis, can we truly say in our own hearts that we are trying to change? If I ask for forgiveness without the willingness and effort on my part to change, I “might as well ask the Lord to cause my wheat and corn to grow, without my plowing the ground and casting in the seed.” President Dallin H Oaks - Healing the Sick, April 2010 General Conference)

Regarding the gift of tongues – I learnt to speak Cantonese on my mission. Having the spirit present through Obedience keeps the mind clear and adds light and intelligence which makes learning another language easier. But I feel that the gradual ability to learn a language (even for the purpose to spread the Gospel) is not the ultimate demonstration of the gift of Tongues. Just as Joseph taught here: “for any man that has the Holy Ghost, can speak of the things of God in his own tongue as well as to speak in another; for faith comes not by signs, but by hearing the word of God.”

The times I truly felt the Spirit bless me with this Gift, were in the moments I did not know what to say but chose to open my mouth and speak the things of God anyway. The ability to deliver the message and the ability for those listening to receive it, regardless of the words spoken, is the evidence of that Gift. I will never forget a meeting my companion and I had with a family in a far corner of Hong Kong in the early months of my mission. My companion spoke very clear Chinese and I had trouble keeping up with the discussion. I was lost but had a strong desire to testify of truth and I felt that my only barrier was language – I asked the Lord to strengthen my weakness and when I opened my mouth to testify, I felt guided by the Holy Ghost to know what

to say. The words spoken were not important. I felt the Holy Ghost deliver the message and could discern that it was received in that same spirit.

Topher's Thoughts:

My original answer to this question got corrupted when my computer crashed so that was fun.

When I first read the statement "Repentance is a thing that cannot be trifled with every day. Daily transgression and daily repentance is not that which is pleasing in the sight of God." I was confused. Of course, God wants us to repent daily. Even constantly. I then realized its not about constantly repenting, its about forsaking the sin that is requiring the constant repentance. Otherwise its not true repentance. It's kinda like constantly changing the bandage without having stitched the wound

D&C 58:43 - "By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them".

Alma 32:13 "Whosoever repenteth shall find mercy; and he that findeth mercy and endureth to the end the same shall be saved"

President Ezra Taft Benson – "It is better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent." (President Benson, BYU Devotional, Oct. 13, 1987)

Wilford Woodruff, while serving as a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, recorded: "Joseph the Seer arose in the power of God; reproved and rebuked wickedness before the people, in the name of the Lord God. He wished to say a few words to suit the condition of the general mass, and then said:

"I shall speak with authority of the Priesthood in the name of the Lord God. ... Notwithstanding this congregation profess to be Saints, yet I stand in the midst of all [kinds of] characters and classes of men. If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses, for if we are not drawing towards God in principle, we are going from Him and drawing towards the devil. Yes, I am standing in the midst of all kinds of people.

"Search your hearts, and see if you are like God. I have searched mine, and feel to repent of all my sins.

"We have thieves among us, adulterers, liars, hypocrites. If God should speak from heaven, He would command you not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to covet, nor deceive, but be faithful over a few things. ... Is not God good? Then you be good; if He is faithful, then you be faithful. Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, and seek for every good thing. The Church must be cleansed, and I proclaim against all iniquity."

"You must be innocent, or you cannot come up before God: if we would come before God, we must keep ourselves pure, as He is pure. The devil has great power to deceive; **he will so transform things as to make one gape at those who are doing the will of God. ... Iniquity must be purged out from the midst of the Saints; then the veil will be rent, and the blessings of heaven will flow down**—they will roll down like the Mississippi river."

"Let not any man publish his own righteousness, for others can see that for him; sooner let him confess his sins, and then he will be forgiven, and he will bring forth more fruit."

"All hearts must repent and be pure, and God will regard them and bless them in a manner that they could not be blessed in any other way."

I just love that whole quote. Just quickly a couple of points I love in there.

"The devil has great power to deceive; **he will so transform things as to make one gape at those who are doing the will of God**". Is this not exactly how the world is now? How backwards Christianity appears to be in a world of blasphemers, non-believers and those who call good bad and bad good...

“Let not any man publish his own righteousness, for others can see that for him; sooner let him confess his sins, and then he will be forgiven”. Don’t be one of those people that is always trying to “show” people that theyre righteous or somehow better than others. Righteousness speaks for itself. Instead, confess your sins! I love how Joseph always focuses on humility and repentance, when if anyone could publish his own righteousness it could’ve been him.

“Iniquity must be purged out from the midst of the Saints; then the veil will be rent, and the blessings of heaven will flow down”. How do we rend the veil and receive the blessings from heaven? Purge out iniquity! Zion again!

Micah’s Thoughts:

Faith comes by hearing and heeding the servants of God ergo one cannot claim faith as a reason for disregarding the counsels of the prophets of God. Once again, they have it completely backwards- listening to and heeding the keys is having faith in the Lord and trusting in our own spirit-o-meters over that of the keys is having faith in the arm of flesh.

The rest of the points here are solid but relatively self-explanatory.

The Prophet’s Remarks to the Twelve p.89-90

At six o'clock, Nov. 12, 1835, the Apostles met with the First Presidency in council and on this occasion the Prophet made the following remarks:

I am happy in the enjoyment of this opportunity of meeting with this Council on this occasion. I am satisfied that the Spirit of the Lord is here, and I am satisfied with all the brethren present; and I need not say that you have my utmost confidence, and that I intend to uphold you to the uttermost, for I am well aware that you have to sustain my character against the vile calumnies and reproaches of this ungodly generation, and that you delight in so doing.

Darkness prevails at this time as it did at the time Jesus Christ was about to be crucified. The powers of darkness strove to obscure the glorious Sun of righteousness, that began to dawn upon the world, and was soon to burst in great blessings upon the heads of the faithful; and let me tell you, brethren, that great blessings await us at this time, and will soon be poured out upon us, if we are faithful in all things, for we are even entitled to greater spiritual blessings than they were, because they had Christ in person with them, to instruct them in the great plan of salvation. His personal presence we have not, therefore we have need of greater faith, on account of our peculiar circumstances; and I am determined to do all that I can to uphold you, although I may do many things inadvertently that are not right in the sight of God.

Ammon’s Thoughts:

Since Joseph’s time we have seen a gradual degradation of society. If darkness prevailed at Joseph’s time, then we are almost entirely overshadowed with darkness now.

“I testify that wickedness is rapidly expanding in every segment of our society. (See D&C 1:14–16; 84:49–53.) It is more highly organized, more cleverly disguised, and more powerfully promoted than ever before. Secret combinations lusting for power, gain, and glory are flourishing. ... (See Ether 8:18–25.)” (Ezra Taft Benson, “I Testify,” Ensign, Nov. 1988, 87).

“You young people are being raised in enemy territory. We know from the scriptures that there was a war in heaven and that Lucifer rebelled and, with his followers, ‘was cast out into the earth’ [Revelation 12:9]. He is

determined to disrupt our Heavenly Father's plan and seeks to control the minds and actions of all" ("Counsel to Youth," Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2011, 16).

I often marvel at the Faith we have in these days of darkness. Without the ability to walk with Christ personally, we walk entirely by Faith in him. The greater opportunity to develop and exercise Faith provides the greater opportunity to receive the blessings that come as a consequence. There is an equal and opposite in all things and it is required to bring forth righteousness:

2 Nephi 2:11

"For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, my firstborn in the wilderness, righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad..."

Greater Faith is required due to the greater opposition we face at this time and therefore greater blessings.

I often think of the Saints in Kirtland. The Lord was building his people up through sacrifice and hardship. They spent all of their time and money building up the Temple in Kirtland and put the need of building up the Kingdom of God on Earth often above their own needs.

Excerpt from 'Faith and Devotion in Building the Kirtland Temple' by Richard O. Cowan:

"Eager to start, Hyrum Smith and Reynolds Cahoon went to work digging by hand the trench for the foundation. The Saints were so impoverished at this time, an early member recalled, that "there was not a scraper and hardly a plow that could be obtained." Nevertheless, the Prophet acknowledged, "Our unity, harmony and charity abounded to strengthen us to do the commandments of God." On Wednesday, July 23, 1833, Joseph Smith and other elders laid cornerstones for the Kirtland Temple "after the order of the Holy Priesthood," beginning with the southeast corner.

A major interruption came during the summer of 1834. At the time of the year when the weather was most favorable for construction, few workmen were available because many had joined Joseph Smith in the march of Zion's Camp to Missouri. Following the return of Zion's Camp, work on the temple went forward more rapidly. In October 1834 Joseph Smith recalled, "Great exertions were made to expedite the work of the Lord's house, and notwithstanding it was commenced almost with nothing, as to means, yet the way opened as we proceeded, and the Saints rejoiced." At this time the temple walls were four feet high, and they rose quickly during the winter of 1834–35.

Almost all able-bodied men, except those away on missions, worked on the temple. Joseph Smith set the example, serving as foreman in the quarry. "Come, brethren," he admonished, "let us go into the stone-quarry and work for the Lord." On Saturdays a number of men brought teams and wagons, quarried the rock, and hauled enough to the building site to keep the masons busy during the coming week.

Work on the temple went forward but not without difficulty. Under the cover of darkness, vandals attempted to destroy the walls then under construction. Because of further threatened mob violence, those who worked on the temple by day guarded it at night to protect what they had built. Night after night for many weeks, Heber C. Kimball recalled, "We . . . were not permitted to take off our clothes, and were obliged to lay with our fire locks in our arms." Sidney Rigdon later described how the Saints "had wet those walls with their tears, when, in the silent shades of the night, they were praying to the God of heaven to protect them, and stay the unhallowed hands of ruthless spoilers, who had uttered a prophesy [sic] . . . that the walls should never be erected."

This is just a glimpse at the effort and opposition experienced in building the Temple in Kirtland. **And how were they rewarded?**

The Saints' faith and devotion in building the Kirtland Temple was rewarded. Truly "sacrifice" brought forth "the blessings of heaven." Remarkable spiritual experiences during early 1836 confirmed that the Lord accepted the structure.

- Prophet recorded, and he "beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof." He saw "the blazing throne of God" and the "beautiful streets of that kingdom, which had the appearance of being paved with gold" (D&C 137:1–4). He learned that "all who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God" (D&C 137:7).
- These wonderful spiritual experiences continued during the next several weeks. Saints reported seeing heavenly messengers in at least ten different meetings. At five of these meetings, individuals even testified that they beheld the Savior Himself. Many received visions, prophesied, or spoke in tongues.
- At the Temple dedication - After the sacrament was administered and passed to the congregation, Joseph Smith and others testified that they saw heavenly messengers present during the service. The dedication concluded with the entire congregation standing and rendering the sacred "Hosanna Shout": "Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna to God and the Lamb, amen, amen, and amen." Eliza R. Snow felt that the shout in Kirtland was given "with such power as seemed almost sufficient to raise the roof from the building."
- That evening more than four hundred priesthood bearers met in the temple. Joseph Smith instructed the brethren that they should be prepared to prophesy when directed by the Spirit. He recorded: "Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation."
- David Whitmer testified that "he saw three angels passing up the south aisle." People living in the area heard "an unusual sound" coming from the Lord's house and saw "a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple." Others reported seeing angels hovering over the temple and hearing heavenly singing.
- On Wednesday, March 30, approximately three hundred Saints attended a special meeting in the temple, which continued until early the following morning. "The Savior made His appearance to some, while angels ministered to others, and it was a Pentecost and an endowment indeed, long to be remembered." An even more significant experience occurred on Sunday, April 3, when the Savior appeared to accept the temple, which had been dedicated one week earlier, and the ancient prophets Moses, Elias, and Elijah restored keys of authority (see D&C 110).

What amazing blessings they received for the diligence in following the Counsel of the Prophet to build up the Temple despite their difficult circumstances. Do you think there was a Saint in attendance at the Temple dedication that would say it wasn't worth it?! No way.

It has been 200 years since this event. As discussed earlier, the opposition in our time is also coming to a climax which means that the blessings prepared for the faithful will also climax. Now is not the time to fall asleep!

President Nelson said:

"Our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes again. We will see miraculous indications that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, preside over this Church in majesty and glory," President Nelson said ("Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," Apr. 2018 general conference).

Do we believe this? Do we believe that in our time we will see some of the Lords mightiest works and miracles that denote that Jesus Christ presides over his Church? Do we believe that we will see blessings in the same magnitude as the Saints in Kirtland as we exercise our Faith literally?

I have Faith that the words of the Prophet will be fulfilled and that I will be witness to these miracles. I promise you that if you will strengthen your Faith in Christ by seeking to be obedient to the Lord through his Prophet, you will experience these blessings and miracles as prophesied by President Nelson.

Topher's Thoughts:

I can't tell you how much I would love to be with Joseph Smith and to hear him say "you have my utmost confidence, and that I intend to uphold you to the uttermost" because I can tell you that it is certainly my pleasure to sustain him and his character and that of all other prophets against this ungodly generation. To know and feel that I stand right before the Lord and with Joseph Smith does and would bring me more Joy than anything.

Joseph said whilst comparing us to those at the time of the crucifixion "we are even entitled to greater spiritual blessings than they were" because "we have need of greater faith". Again, with greater faith comes greater blessings.

I love Joseph's humility and how he always acknowledges his weaknesses and faults. He learnt the hard way.

"On June 14, 1828, Martin Harris left Harmony, Pennsylvania, taking the first 116 manuscript pages translated from the gold plates to show to some of his family members in Palmyra, New York. The very next day, Joseph and Emma's first child was born, a son they named Alvin. The baby died that same day, and Emma's health declined until she was near death herself. The Prophet's mother later wrote: "For some time, [Emma] seemed to tremble upon the verge of the silent home of her infant. So uncertain seemed her fate for a season that in the space of two weeks her husband never slept one hour in undisturbed quiet. At the end of this time, his anxiety became so great about the manuscript that he determined, as his wife was now some better, that as soon as she had gained a little more strength he would make a trip to New York and see after the same."¹

In July, at Emma's suggestion, the Prophet left Emma in her mother's care and traveled by stagecoach to his parents' home in Manchester Township, New York. The Prophet's trip covered about 125 miles and took two or three days to complete. Distraught about the loss of his firstborn son, worried about his wife, and gravely concerned about the manuscript, Joseph neither ate nor slept during the entire trip. A fellow traveler, the only other passenger on the stagecoach, observed the Prophet's weakened state and insisted on accompanying him for the 20-mile walk from the stagecoach station to the Smith home. For the last four miles of the walk, recalled the Prophet's mother, "the stranger was under the necessity of leading Joseph by his arm, for nature was too much exhausted to support him any longer and he would fall asleep as he stood upon his feet."² Immediately upon reaching his parents' home, the Prophet sent for Martin Harris.

Martin arrived at the Smith home in the early afternoon, downcast and forlorn. He did not have the manuscript, he said, and did not know where it was. Hearing this, Joseph exclaimed, "Oh! My God, my God. ... All is lost, is lost. What shall I do? I have sinned. It is I that tempted the wrath of God by asking him for that which I had no right to ask. ... How shall I appear before the Lord? Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?"

As the day wore on, the Prophet paced back and forth in his parents' home in great distress, "weeping and grieving." The next day he left to return to Harmony, where, he said, "I commenced humbling myself in mighty prayer before the Lord ... that if possible I might obtain mercy at his hands and be forgiven of all that I had done which was contrary to his will."³

The Lord severely chastised the Prophet for fearing man more than God, but assured him he could be forgiven. "Thou art Joseph," the Lord said, "and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall. But remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work" (D&C 3:9–10).

For a time, the Lord took the Urim and Thummim and the plates from Joseph. But these things were soon restored to him. "The angel was rejoiced when he gave me back the Urim and Thummim," the Prophet recalled, "and said that God was pleased with my faithfulness and humility, and loved me for my penitence and diligence in prayer, in the which I had performed my duty so well as to ... be able to enter upon the work of translation again."⁴ As Joseph moved forward in the great work before him, he was now fortified by the sweet feelings of receiving the Lord's forgiveness and a renewed determination to do His will." (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith – Chapter 5)

Joseph went from losing his first child AND the 116 pages – basically two of the worst things that could ever happen – and then through the repentance process and to the "sweet feelings of receiving the Lord's forgiveness and a renewed determination to do His will." I cant even imagine what he went through for the Lord, his family and the church itself. And I proudly sustain him and would consider it my utmost blessing for him to do the same. Maybe we will receive that opportunity soon?

Micah's Thoughts:

We need to have greater faith before we can have these blessings. That faith has been described and has been gone over in this fireside. I do find it interesting how Joseph Smith does identify these brothers and sisters in the last days who finally rend the veil of unbelief and obtain those blessings to be a fulfillment of the Savior's preaching "because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Which makes me wonder if a requirement to be part of that group is to have faith as the Brother of Jared but have not yet seen the Lord. I believe this quote and the next quote are good examples of how to not practice priestcraft as well as common misconceptions surrounding it.

Necessity of Faith p.270

Because faith is wanting, the fruits are. No man since the world was had faith without having something along with it. The ancients quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, women received their dead, etc. By faith the worlds were made. A man who has none of the gifts has no faith; and he deceives himself, if he supposes he has. Faith has been wanting, not only among the heathen, but in professed Christendom also, so that tongues, healings, prophecy, and prophets and apostles, and all the gifts and blessings have been wanting.

Some of the company thought I was not a very meek Prophet; so I told them: "I am meek and lowly in heart," and will personify Jesus for a moment, to illustrate the principle, and cried out with a loud voice, "Woe unto you, ye doctors; woe unto you, ye lawyers; woe unto you, ye scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites!" But you cannot find the place where I ever went that I found fault with their food, their drink, their house, their lodgings; no, never; and this is what is meant by the meekness and lowliness of Jesus.

Ammon's Thoughts:

Faith has always been demonstrated by its fruits. Faith is experienced, not hoped for without action. It is through the literal application of Faith that the fruits come forth. One of my favourite passages below.

Hebrews 11:29-34:

29 *By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.*

30 *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.*

31 *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.*

32 *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:*

33 *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

34 *Quenched the violence of afire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.*

I believe in a God that will do these things. I believe them literally. He has flattened the walls of Jericho in my life. He has closed the mouth of Lions for me. Out of weakness he has made me strong. I taste the fruit of Faith and it is good – It has now become an unshakable knowledge in me. My testimony stands independent of all others under Heaven. Because of this knowledge, I will follow every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God through his appointed keys and remain on his side, his team, until I meet the Saviour at his return. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Topher's Thoughts:

Again, this is more of Joseph's character and personality that I cannot get enough of! This reminds me of Micah's paper - Satan unites, Jesus divides. People have the wrong definition of "Meek" and I love that Joseph is willing to be bold and to demonstrate it. And note it is not about judging the physical circumstances of someone but their spiritual.

In Joseph's time and even running to the present day, heathens and other Christian religions are deceiving themselves. Remember that when Joseph received the First Vision he was shut down by his Methodist pastor because miracles and Revelations were no longer received from God. So, individuals and other religions are denying themselves the ability to have faith in so many principles of the Gospel because they straight up deny that they're possible. Then some of the religions will focus on maybe one principle or spiritual gift like the gift of tongues or healings or even something like baptism and just focus solely on that thing whilst denying and missing out on all the other amazing gifts Heavenly Father has to offer. And the sad thing is that this has ALL been restored to the earth through Joseph Smith and they don't know where to find it because they aren't even looking.

Articles of Faith 1:7: "We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth." Joseph Smith has further elaborated and said "'We ... believe in prophecy, in tongues, in visions, and in revelations, in gifts, and in healings; and that these things cannot be enjoyed without the gift of the Holy Ghost.'" (History of the Church, 5:27). We are blessed to truly have the Gift of the Holy Ghost that is required to truly experience these blessings.

Now, on faith and the fruits that come with it, Spencer W. Kimball said "It takes faith—unseeing faith—for young people to proceed immediately with their family responsibilities in the face of financial uncertainties. It takes faith for the young woman to bear her family instead of accepting employment, especially when schooling for the young husband is to be finished. It takes faith to observe the Sabbath when 'time and a half' can be had working, when sales can be made, when merchandise can be sold. It takes a great faith to pay tithes when funds are scarce and demands are great. It takes faith to fast and have family prayers and to observe the Word of Wisdom. It takes faith to do ward teaching, stake missionary work, and other service, when sacrifice is required. It takes faith to fill foreign missions. But know this—that all these are of the planting, while faithful devout families, spiritual security, peace, and eternal life are the harvests.

“Remember that Abraham, Moses, Elijah, and others could not see clearly the end from the beginning. They also walked by faith and without sight. Remember again that no gates were open; Laban was not drunk; and no earthly hope was justified at the moment Nephi exercised his faith and set out finally to get the plates. No asbestos clothes or other ordinary protective devices were in the fiery furnace to protect the three Hebrews from death; there were no leather nor metal muzzles for the mouths of the lions when Daniel was locked in the den.

“Remember that there were no clouds in the sky nor any hydrometer in his hand when Elijah promised an immediate break in the long extended drouth; though Joshua may have witnessed the miracle of the Red Sea, yet how could he by mortal means perceive that the flooding Jordan would back up for the exact time needed for the crossing, and then flow on its way to the Dead Sea.

“Remember that there were no clouds in the sky, no evidence of rain, and no precedent for the deluge when Noah built the ark according to commandment. There was no ram in the thicket when Isaac and his father left for Moriah for the sacrifice. Remember there were no towns and cities, no farms and gardens, no homes and storehouses, no blossoming desert in Utah when the persecuted pioneers crossed the plains. And remember that there were no heavenly beings in Palmyra, on the Susquehanna or on Cumorah when the soul-hungry Joseph slipped quietly into the Grove, knelt in prayer on the river bank, and climbed the slopes of the sacred hill.

“But know this: that undaunted faith can stop the mouths of lions, make ineffective the fiery flames, make dry corridors through beds of rivers and seas. Unwavering faith can protect against deluge, terminate drouths, heal the sick, and bring heavenly manifestations. Indomitable faith can help us live the commandments and thereby bring blessings unnumbered with peace, perfection, and exaltation in the kingdom of God” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1952, 50–51).

I’m grateful we believe in a God of Miracles. Literal miracles. Whilst many will say that these things are done away, we are expecting and looking forward to more of these in our future. President Nelson said that the Lord will be showing some of his mightiest works and greatest miracles between now and the Second Coming. I look forward to these miracles and have the faith required to experience them. I look forward to sustaining Joseph Smith in this ungodly generation and being worthy enough to participate in the redemption of Zion (if Australians can?). The Saviour is coming and hopefully we are all looking forward to it with Faith. In the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

Micah’s Thoughts:

This goes back to the milk pan vs the milk in the pan. The Church can still be true, the milk pan can still be a milk pan, its our job to put the fruits into the pan, i.e. put the milk in the milk pan. Joseph Smith here says that if you have faith you should have at least one of the fruits of it- he goes as far as to say if you don’t have a single gift and yet believe you have faith, you have deceived yourself. I think people still undervalue the Lecture on Faith and just how important it is to understand them and develop that faith and to acquire those gifts. Brothers and sisters, seek for these gifts in faith and if you shall seek them with the intent to build up the Kingdom and it is meet for you to have them they shall be given.

Joseph’s explanation of being meek here does two things, it teaches a correct principle that should be understood and second it shows us just how ignorant we are today as members. The Saints in Joseph Smith’s time had an excuse, they didn’t have Joseph Smith growing up and were just learning stuff for the first time. We have had the teachings of the prophet Joseph Smith (or history of the Church) for almost 200 years, and yet we still don’t know what being meek is, humble, prideful etc.

Brothers and sisters at the close of the fireside I would just like to once again recommit you to covenant with the Lord Zion or bust. Read the scriptures, learn what has been taught to us by the keys and whether that be something great or something small like doing 10 jumping jacks, let us covenant to the Lord “Zion or bust” that

we may be found worthy to be counted among the jewels in His crown when His kingdom is established is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.