

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

Richard O. Cowan

Through his inspired prophets, our Heavenly Father has promised wonderful blessings to his children who keep his commandments. While most of these relate to our condition following mortality, other blessings relate more especially to our sojourn here on earth. Among these are the promises made to Abraham and those who would be descended from him.

BLESSINGS FOR ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS

The Lord repeatedly made wonderful promises to Abraham and his posterity. While Abram was still living in Haran, the Lord revealed to him, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great. . . . And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2–3). After Abram settled in Canaan, the Lord continued to unfold his future: “Look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth:

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” (Genesis 13:14–16).

On another occasion, the Lord directed Abram, “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be” (Genesis 15:5). Finally, in Genesis 17, the Lord changed Abram’s name to Abraham (verse 5) and promised him that he would be fruitful and become known as the “father of many nations” (verse 4) and that kings would be among his posterity (verse 6).

Eventually Sarah, though advanced in age, was blessed to bear a son, Isaac. Through him, the promises to Abraham concerning a great posterity would need to be fulfilled. Hence the Lord’s command that Abraham sacrifice Isaac was a significant test. When Abraham passed this test, he was again assured that his posterity would become “as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” and that in his “seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 22:17, 18). Modern-day revelation gives us more insight into the Lord’s covenant with Abraham:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father . . .

For I give unto thee a promise that . . . in thy seed after thee . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. (Abraham 2:9–11)

These blessings were reconfirmed to Abraham’s son Isaac, who by this time had married Rebekah: “Unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 26:3–4). These blessings were renewed yet again to Isaac’s son Jacob: “God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou

mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee” (Genesis 28:3–4). So closely identified were these three patriarchs in the memories of their descendants that the Lord sometimes simply identified himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see, for example, Exodus 3:15–16). Likewise, the promises made to these three great leaders are similarly referred to as the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified, “Elias [who appeared at Kirtland in 1836] gives the promise—received of old by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—that in modern men and in their seed all generations shall be blessed. And we are now offering the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to all who will receive them.”¹ More specifically, he explained, “Every person married in the temple for time and for all eternity has sealed upon him, conditioned upon his faithfulness, all of the blessings of the ancient patriarchs, including the crowning promise and assurance of eternal increase, which means literally, a posterity as numerous as the dust particles of the earth.”²

As descendants of Abraham, either literally or by adoption, we are heirs to this covenant (see, for example, Matthew 3:9 and 3 Nephi 21:6), but being a covenant people does not make us better than others. For us, receiving the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob not only includes such promises as an innumerable posterity but also the responsibility to reach out to others in order to be instruments in the Lord’s hands to bless all the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The prophet Brigham Young affirmed, “I expect to obtain the same as Abraham obtained by faith and prayer, also the same as Isaac and Jacob obtained; but there are few who live for the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” President Young insisted that being heirs to a blessing will not “do us any good, unless we live for it.”³ Thus, even though we may be promised in our patriarchal blessing that we are heirs to these great blessings, we need to live to be worthy of them.

THE RESURRECTION

One of the most marvelous blessings that comes to all unconditionally is the Resurrection, enabling us to live forever. Were it not for this assurance, the promise of an eternal increase could not be fulfilled. The Master

left ample evidence that the Resurrection is not just figurative but actual. When he appeared to the eleven disciples who were meeting in a closed room, he directed them, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have” (Luke 24:39). The Book of Mormon provides a powerful second witness. When the risen Savior visited the 2,500 who had gathered at the temple in the land Bountiful, he took enough time to let them have experiences that would enable them to bear testimony of his literal Resurrection: “And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth *one by one* until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come” (3 Nephi 11:15; emphasis added). Even if each individual had only a few seconds with the Lord, the whole experience would still have required more than two hours.

Book of Mormon prophets explained what actually occurs in the Resurrection. They testified that “the spirit and the body shall be reunited again in its perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame, even as we now are . . . and even there shall not so much as a hair of their heads be lost (Alma 11:43–44; compare Alma 40:23). Specifically, President Joseph Fielding Smith assured, “If there has been some deformity or physical impairment in this life, it will be removed.”⁴ Many of us have loved ones dealing with physical challenges who can therefore look forward eagerly to having an immortal tabernacle perfect in every detail. Elder Orson Pratt, undoubtedly tongue in cheek, worried that we might have abnormally long, uncut fingernails or hair when everything is restored. He therefore explained, “I do not believe that every particle that is ever incorporated in the systems of human creatures will be resurrected with them. . . . But a sufficient amount of the particles . . . will be used . . . to make perfect and complete tabernacles for celestial spirits.”⁵

Even though every resurrected body will be physically perfect, not all will be prepared to enjoy the same level of glory. In his great chapter on the Resurrection, Paul taught, “There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial

is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:40–42).

A latter-day revelation clarifies that we will inherit a body suited for the kingdom whose law we have lived and thereby have qualified to receive. The Lord declared, “He who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory” (D&C 88:22). The Lord then added that those who have lived the celestial law will receive a body suited for that glory (see D&C 88:18–32).

What does it mean to live a celestial law? This is the law on which the gospel of Jesus Christ is based. In his Sermon on the Mount, the Lord contrasted lesser standards with those he was requiring. For instance, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill”—perhaps at least a terrestrial standard—“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”—the higher celestial standard. Similarly, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”—the terrestrial standard—was supplanted by “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”—the celestial requirement (see Matthew 5:21–22, 27–28). We can apply this same principle to judging other aspects of our gospel living. For example, *Am I a celestial or terrestrial home or visiting teacher?*

President Joseph Fielding Smith pointed out that the resurrected bodies suited for different degrees of glory “will differ as distinctly as do bodies here.” He explained that the faithful “will gain celestial bodies with all the powers of exaltation and eternal increase. These bodies will shine like the sun as our Savior’s does.” Those who are exalted in the celestial kingdom will “have the ‘continuation of the seeds forever.’ They will live in the family relationship.”⁶

The Apostle Paul also spoke of an order or sequence of resurrection. Not all will be resurrected at once, but all will arise, “every man in his own order” (1 Corinthians 15:23). Here again, modern revelation elaborates on Paul’s statement (see, for example, D&C 88:96–102).

There are two major phases of the Resurrection (see John 5:28–29 and Acts 24:15): The “first resurrection,” or “resurrection of the just,” began with the Resurrection of Christ and will close with the end of the

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

Millennium. Those going to the celestial and terrestrial kingdoms will be resurrected during this phase. The “second resurrection,” or “resurrection of the unjust,” will follow the Millennium and will include those who are going to the telestial kingdom and those who have become sons of perdition during mortality.

The first resurrection, or resurrection of the just, may then be further subdivided into two parts. “Those being resurrected with celestial bodies, whose destiny is to inherit a celestial kingdom,” Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, “will come forth in the *morning* of the First Resurrection.”⁷ This includes not only those who were resurrected with Christ but those who will be resurrected and meet him in the clouds of heaven at the time of his Second Coming.

Terrestrial resurrections, which might be called the evening of the first resurrection, will begin only after Christ arrives to reign over the earth for a thousand years. The remaining dead will be judged at the beginning of the Millennium but will be found unworthy; as a result, they will spend the thousand years in the spirit prison (see D&C 43:18) and will be resurrected after the Millennium has ended (compare D&C 88:100–102 with D&C 76:84–85).

The Lord has revealed that only when the physical body and its eternal spirit are “inseparably connected” by the Resurrection can we “receive a fulness of joy” (D&C 93:33). President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “No man in mortal life can receive the fulness of joy which the Lord has in store for him. Only after the resurrection from the dead, only when the spirit and the body are inseparably connected—when through the resurrection the spirit and the body are welded together inseparably—can that fulness come. That is the beauty of the resurrection,” he insisted, “that is the objective of the resurrection from the dead.”⁸

VISIONS OF ETERNITY

The gospel of Jesus Christ promises more than the Resurrection, as wonderful as it is. The Lord told Moses, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass [1] the immortality and [2] eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Notice there are two distinct objectives. To Martha, who was grieving following the death of her brother Lazarus, the Savior similarly declared, “I

am [1] the resurrection, and [2] the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25–26). In this declaration he again made two promises. First, through his Atonement all humankind will overcome the physical death. Second, as President Joseph Fielding Smith explained, “In giving to those who believed on him the power that they should never die, he had no reference to the mortal or physical dissolution, but to the second death, which is . . . the condemnation of those who are consigned to immortality outside of the kingdom of God.”⁹

Robert L. Millet clarified the difference between how the gospel offers each of these two gifts. The Atonement of Jesus Christ gives us Resurrection unconditionally, as well as the opportunity to inherit eternal life. As he explained, “Immortality . . . is a free gift to all. Eternal life, on the other hand, is something for which one must qualify through faithful obedience to the statutes and commandments provided through the plan of salvation. Both of these conditions are made available through our Lord’s suffering in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, as well as his rise to glorious immortality from the Arimathean’s tomb.”¹⁰ There is a significant difference between these two gifts, pointed out Elder Marion G. Romney: “Immortality denotes *length* of life—deathless. Eternal life denotes *quality* of life—the quality of life God enjoys.”¹¹

Latter-day Saints often make the distinction between salvation and exaltation. We actually need both to achieve our maximum potential. Elder Russell M. Nelson explained:

To be saved—or to gain salvation—means to be saved from physical and spiritual death. Because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, all people will be resurrected and saved from physical death. People may also be saved from individual spiritual death through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, by their faith in Him, by living in obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel, and by serving Him. To be exalted—or to gain exaltation—refers to the highest state of happiness and glory in the celestial realm. These blessings can come to us after we leave this frail and mortal existence. The time to prepare for our eventual salvation and exaltation is now.¹²

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

The Lord has promised that the faithful will “come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection; and shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths, . . . and they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end” (D&C 132:19–20). The same passage of scripture adds, “This is eternal lives” (D&C 132:24), and the plural “lives” suggests the multiplicity of the blessings promised. Some may be uncomfortable with the notion that we may become gods. However, just as any child has the potential to become like his or her parents, so do we, as the spirit sons or daughters of God (see Hebrews 12:9), have the capacity to become like him. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commanded, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Of course, this perfection doesn’t come all at once. “Just as Christ ‘received not of the fulness’ of the glory of the Father at the first, but ‘continued from grace to grace’—grew line upon line, developed from one level of spiritual grace to a higher,” Millet explained, “and just as Christ received in the resurrection the fulness of the Father, so may all men and women follow such a path and grow in spiritual graces until they inherit all that the Father has” (see D&C 93:12–20).¹³

The Lord has revealed relatively little concerning the telestial and terrestrial kingdoms, or even the lower two levels of the celestial kingdom. Perhaps they are included in his revelations merely to emphasize the lofty state to be inherited by those who are exalted in the highest level of the celestial kingdom—the condition our Father wants us to strive for. “Those who qualify for this kingdom of glory,” Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught, “‘shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever’ (D&C 76:62). Those who have met the highest requirements for this kingdom, including faithfulness to covenants made in a temple of God and marriage for eternity, will be exalted to the godlike state referred to as the ‘fulness’ of the Father or eternal life.”¹⁴ Still, Elder Charles W. Penrose reminded us that Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father “will always be above us.”¹⁵

The physical condition of that exalted state was described graphically by Orson Pratt: “[God the Father] will light up that world; they will have no need of the rays of the sun, as we now have, neither of the moon, nor stars, so far as light is concerned, for the Lord God will be their light and their glory from that time henceforth and forever.”¹⁶ But how can we attain this exalted state?

THE ATONEMENT AND THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ, our Savior, has established the means by which we can access the marvelous blessings he offers to us, including the power to overcome both physical and spiritual death. Elder Marion G. Romney explained why Christ was uniquely qualified to overcome physical death. Like all of us, Christ was a spirit son of God, but our physical bodies “are begotten of mortal men and are, therefore, subject to death, being descendants and inheritors from Adam, while Christ’s physical body was begotten of God, our Heavenly Father—an immortal being not subject to death.”¹⁷ Hence the Savior inherited from his mortal mother, as do we all, the capacity to die. But unlike us, he inherited from his immortal Father the power to live forever. Therefore, it is not accurate to say that the Savior was killed on the cross, because no person had the power to take his life from him. The Savior himself explained this as he likened himself to the Good Shepherd. Directly after the well-known reference to his “other sheep,” he specifically testified, “No man taketh [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself” (John 10:18).

The Savior also had power over the spiritual death—an estrangement from God caused by sin. The Apostle Paul testified that even though Christ was “tempted like as we are,” he was “yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Hence he is able to plead our cause with the Father, saying, “Behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin” (D&C 45:4).

Jesus Christ was willing to accomplish the Atonement because of his great love for us. One of the most-beloved and oft-quoted biblical passages affirms, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). A latter-day revelation clarifies that the Savior shared the

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

Father's love and therefore was a willing participant in the great atoning sacrifice. Jesus Christ emphasized that he also "so loved the world that he gave his own life, that as many as would believe might become the sons of God" (D&C 34:3).

The Lord's teaching about how the Atonement applies in our lives is called the gospel, which means "glad tidings" or "good news." Alma gratefully acknowledged, "He will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people" (Alma 7:11–12).

Covenants are an important means for implementing the gospel in our own lives. They are solemn agreements in which God specifies blessings to be received and what we must do to receive them. The Lord equated "mine everlasting covenant" with the "fulness of my gospel" (D&C 66:2). This overarching covenant has several subcategories such as the covenant we make at baptism and the oath and covenant pertaining to the priesthood, as well as the covenants made in connection with eternal marriage in the temple. The phrase "new and everlasting covenant of marriage" (such as in D&C 131:2) is so often heard that many have erroneously concluded that eternal marriage is always what is meant by "the new and everlasting covenant." Elder Joseph Fielding Smith lamented, "I regret to say that there are some members of the Church who are misled and misinformed in regard to what the new and everlasting covenant really is." Actually, he insisted, "the new and everlasting covenant is the sum total of all gospel covenants and obligations."¹⁸ He concluded, "Marriage properly performed, baptism, ordination to the priesthood, everything else—every contract, every obligation, every performance that pertains to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise according to his law here given, is a part of the new and everlasting covenant."¹⁹

The gospel is certainly "everlasting" because it was ordained from the beginning, and its beneficial effects are never-ending. It may be regarded as "new" for at least two reasons. The Savior established his new covenant

based on love in contrast to the requirements under the law of Moses. Elder Marion D. Hanks pointed out, “Jesus referred repeatedly to the old law by which they had been governed—and then fitted those teachings into the higher and holier context of the law of love he had come to invoke among God’s children.”²⁰ A second reason the gospel may be called “new” is because it has been newly restored in these latter days. Stephen E. Robinson eloquently taught the power we can access through the Savior’s Atonement and gospel: “In the new covenant of faith, perfect innocence is still required, but it is required of the team or partnership of Christ-and-me, rather than of me alone. Because Christ and I are one in the gospel covenant, God accepts our combined total worthiness, and together Christ and I are perfectly worthy.”²¹

REQUIREMENTS FOR THESE BLESSINGS

Concerning what we must do to inherit these great blessings, Elder M. Russell Ballard testified, “Your Heavenly Father has promised in return that He will give marvelous blessings to those who honor their covenants, keep His commandments, and endure faithfully to the end. They will be sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise and will be ‘given *all* things’ (D&C 76:55; emphasis added; see also D&C 76:50–54, 70), including an inheritance in the celestial kingdom.”²²

Elder David A. Bednar explained what is meant by this sealing: “The Holy Spirit of Promise is the ratifying power of the Holy Ghost. When sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, an ordinance, vow, or covenant is binding on earth and in heaven. (See D&C 132:7.) Receiving this ‘stamp of approval’ from the Holy Ghost is the result of faithfulness, integrity, and steadfastness in honoring gospel covenants ‘in [the] process of time’ (Moses 7:21).”²³

As noted above, the Resurrection comes to all unconditionally while eternal life is a conditional gift. The “conditions of this gift,” Elder Russell M. Nelson emphasized, “have been established by the Lord, who said, ‘If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.’ Those qualifying conditions include faith in the Lord, repentance, baptism, receiving

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

the Holy Ghost, and remaining faithful to the ordinances and covenants of the temple.”²⁴ Specifically, Elder Nelson noted that “no man in this Church can obtain the highest degree of celestial glory without a worthy woman who is sealed to him.” Hence, as he concluded on another occasion, “While salvation is an individual matter, exaltation is a family matter. Only those who are married in the temple and whose marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise will continue as spouses after death.”²⁵

Thus, even though the gospel incorporates the power of love, it is still based on law. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21). Hence, the Lord acknowledged, “I . . . am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10). What then may we think of as the law of the gospel? Elder William R. Bradford declared:

I have never seen this law, but, like gravity, I have seen its effects and felt its powerful influence in my life. This is the law of the Son of God, even Jesus Christ. . . . He would have us know that “that which is governed by law is also preserved by law and perfected and sanctified by the same” (D&C 88:34). . . . The law of the gospel of Jesus Christ has decreed that every man must repent and be baptized by immersion, after the pattern of the Lawgiver, or he cannot be saved. . . . We could talk about the law of sacrifice and service to one another, moral cleanliness, tithes and offerings, honesty. Indeed, we could review all the many laws that together comprise the law of the gospel. But perhaps enough has been pointed out to draw focus on their exactness, the protection and salvation they provide us if we obey, and the serious consequences for noncompliance.²⁶

Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie also stressed the importance of law in the gospel: “If God is no respecter of persons, then all will be called upon to accept or reject the gospel and work out their salvation in circumstances that the wisdom of heaven holds as equal. None of Adam’s family were to be born in the Garden of Eden in a paradisiacal

state.”²⁷ Hence, these authors concluded, “It cannot be stated more plainly. It will be the seeds of obedience planted and nurtured in the soil of morality that produce the delicious fruits upon which one feasts in the paradise of God.”²⁸

The Lord has provided temples where we can gain a clear vision of the goal for which we are striving, and learn what we must do to attain it. The temple and its ordinances play a key role in giving us the knowledge and power we need to ultimately become exalted. “*Why is the temple especially suited to provide this knowledge?*” Truman G. Madsen asked. “Because the temple is dedicated to that purpose, because there we make covenants to be true to what we understand, not just learning out of curiosity but absorbing into our souls what we most need to understand.”²⁹ Elder D. Todd Christofferson also testified, “Our covenant commitment to Him permits our Heavenly Father to let His divine influence, ‘the power of godliness’ (D&C 84:20), flow into our lives. . . . In all the ordinances, especially those of the temple, we are endowed with power from on high. This ‘power of godliness’ comes in the person and by the influence of the Holy Ghost. The gift of the Holy Ghost is part of the new and everlasting covenant.”³⁰

In the temple, frequently described as the “Lord’s University,” we are taught in an effective way the laws we need to obey. “The ordinances of the endowment,” explained Elder James E. Talmage, “embody certain obligations on the part of the individual, such as covenant and promise to observe the law of strict virtue and chastity, to be charitable, benevolent, tolerant and pure; to devote both talent and material means to the spread of truth and the uplifting of the race; to maintain devotion to the cause of truth; and to seek in every way to contribute to the great preparation that the earth may be made ready to receive her King,—the Lord Jesus Christ.”³¹

Then, in the climaxing ordinance of sealing, a worthy couple is promised a series of almost incomprehensibly marvelous blessings (compare D&C 132:19–24). Thus, as Eldred G. Smith, former Patriarch to the Church, noted, “Temple marriage is not just another form of church wedding; it is a divine covenant with the Lord that if we are faithful to the end, we may become as God now is.”³²

To some, this exalted goal may seem unattainable. Robert Millet, however, sought to keep us from becoming too discouraged: “There is no

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

ceiling on the number of saved beings in eternity, no cap, no quota by which the Father of us all must and will be governed.”³³ Millet continued, “I know you are not perfect and that you make mistakes. You are mortal. You are human. But I know also that you are trying to keep your covenants, not only with deeds but with your whole heart. You truly love God and want to please him. You qualify to hold a temple recommend. These are not things to be dismissed lightly. They place you in a remarkable minority in this world.”³⁴

Elder Bruce C. Hafen similarly acknowledged, “I sense that an increasing number of deeply committed Church members are weighed down beyond the breaking point with discouragement about their personal lives. When we habitually understate the meaning of the Atonement, we take more serious risks than simply leaving one another without comforting reassurances—for some may simply drop out of the race, worn out and beaten down with the harsh and untrue belief that they are just not celestial material.”³⁵

Rather, as we think of our quest to attain the blessings promised to the faithful and the enabling power of the Atonement, we can take to heart the injunction which the Prophet Joseph Smith gave to the beleaguered Saints in 1842, “Brethren, shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren; and on, on to the victory!” (D&C 128:22).

NOTES

1. Bruce R. McConkie, “The Keys of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 22.
2. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982), 264.
3. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 11:117.
4. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 2:292.
5. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:355–56.
6. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:286–87.

7. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 640.
8. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:284.
9. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:266.
10. Robert L. Millet and Joseph Fielding McConkie, *The Life Beyond* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 133.
11. Marion G. Romney, “Easter Thoughts,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 84–85; emphasis added.
12. Russell M. Nelson, “Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign*, May 2008, 8.
13. Robert L. Millet, *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 232.
14. Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 86.
15. Charles W. Penrose, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints’ Book Depot, 1854–86), 26:25.
16. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 21:205.
17. Romney, “Easter Thoughts,” 83.
18. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:156.
19. Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:158.
20. Marion D. Hanks, “The Royal Law,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 10.
21. Stephen E. Robinson, *Believing Christ: The Parable of the Bicycle and Other Good News* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1992), 43.
22. M. Russell Ballard, “Keeping Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 6.
23. David A. Bednar, “Ye Must Be Born Again,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 22.
24. Nelson, “Salvation,” 9.
25. Nelson, “Salvation,” 9; Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, November 2008, 92.
26. William R. Bradford, “The Safety of the Gospel Law,” *Ensign*, November 1977, 64, 65.
27. Millet and McConkie, *The Life Beyond*, 57–58.
28. Millet and McConkie, *The Life Beyond*, 60.
29. Truman G. Madsen, *The Temple: Where Heaven Meets Earth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2008), 30.
30. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Power of Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 2009, 22.
31. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries, Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1962), 100.
32. Eldred G. Smith, in Conference Report, October 1948, 93.
33. Robert L. Millet, *Within Reach* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 18.

BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THE FAITHFUL

34. Millet, *Within Reach*, 4.
35. Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life's Experiences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 5–6.