

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE: DOCTRINAL THEMES OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

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It is given to but few to wield a more powerful influence over Christian history than to Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor who became a prophet, the Pharisee who became the Apostle to the Gentiles. The life and teachings of the Apostle Paul stand as bright reminders of the power of Christ to transform the souls of men and women, to remake the human heart, and to refocus one's misdirected zeal into the way of the Master. When the risen Lord appeared in vision to Ananias of Damascus and instructed him to send for the stricken and blinded Saul, Ananias answered: "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." The response that followed bespeaks the Redeemer's insight into the wonders that would be done at Paul's hand: "Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:11–15).

In this chapter we will consider briefly some of the more significant doctrinal messages from his epistles. Many of those are, in the language of Simon Peter, "things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). I begin with the testimony that the message of Paul was a proclamation of the gospel—Jesus Christ and Him crucified—

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and that he was no more the originator of Christianity (as some foolishly suppose) than Abraham was the originator of the everlasting covenant. Further, as F. F. Bruce observed: "Paul himself is at pains to point out that the gospel which he preached was one and the same gospel as that preached by the other apostles—a striking claim, considering that Paul was neither a companion of Christ in the days of His flesh nor of the original apostles, and that he vigorously asserts his complete independence of these."¹ And yet Paul knew as Peter knew. He knew as Thomas knew. And what he knew—whether from the teachings of Stephen, from the other Apostles, from his own study of the Old Testament with new eyes, or by means of personal revelation—he taught. And he taught with a power, a persuasion, and a holy zeal known only to those who, like Alma and the sons of Mosiah, have gone from darkness to light and whose whole soul yearns to lead others to that same light.

"ALL HAVE SINNED"

One cannot fully appreciate the need for medicine until one is aware of a malady. One does not pant after the cooling draft until one has nearly died of thirst. In the same way, as President Ezra Taft Benson observed, people do not yearn for salvation in Christ until they know why they need Christ, which thing they cannot know until they understand and acknowledge the Fall and its effects upon all mankind.² The Atonement of Jesus Christ is inextricably and eternally tied to the Fall of Adam and Eve. To teach the Atonement without discussing the Fall is to teach the Atonement in the abstract, to lessen its impact, to mitigate its transforming power in the lives of men and women. Thus the Apostle Paul began at the beginning; he laid stress where it needed to be. Quoting the Psalmist, he affirmed: "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Romans 3:10–12; see also Psalms 14:1–3; 53:1–3).

Though we as Latter-day Saints do not subscribe to the belief held by many in the Christian world about the depravity of humankind, yet the burden of scripture, including the New Testament, is that there was a Fall and that it does take a measured toll on all humanity. Paul taught plainly that men and women must be extricated and redeemed from the Fall. Because our first parents partook of the forbidden fruit, death and sin entered the world. We are, as God taught Adam in the earliest ages,

“conceived in sin,” such that when children “begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good” (Moses 6:55). In the words of Lehi, God revealed to the ancients that all persons “were lost, because of the transgression of their parents” (2 Nephi 2:21). Truly, “because of the fall our natures have become evil continually” (Ether 3:2).

We do not believe there is sin in the sexual act, so long as it is undertaken within the bonds of marriage. Nor do we subscribe to the belief in the inability of men and women even to choose good over evil. To say that we are conceived in sin is to say, first of all, that we are conceived into a world of sin. But, more significantly, it is to declare that conception is the vehicle, the means by which a fallen nature, what we know as mortality or what Paul calls “the flesh,” is transmitted to all the posterity of Adam and Eve. The revelations declare that little children are innocent, not because they are that way by nature but rather because Christ’s Atonement declares them to be so (see Moroni 8:8, 12, 22; D&C 29:46; 74:7). In short, “as in Adam, or by nature, they fall, even so the blood of Christ atoneth for their sins” (Mosiah 3:16). Thus all of us struggle not only for forgiveness for individual sins but also for relief and redemption from a fallen nature that yields to sin. That is to say, salvation in Christ consists not only in meeting and satisfying the demands of God’s justice (which forbids uncleanness) but also in enjoying the renovating and cleansing powers of Christ’s blood such that we begin to die as pertaining to unrighteousness and the ways of sin.

“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” Paul wrote to the Romans (Romans 3:23). In speaking of life before coming unto Christ, Paul further taught: “For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were not according to the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. . . . For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me”—that is, to do what is right is in my heart—“but to perform that which is good I find not, only in Christ” (JST, Romans 7:5, 19). Herein lies the solution to the problem of the Fall: though all of us are subject to sin and to the pull of the flesh, there is hope for liberation through Jesus. The Son of God has “delivered us from the power of darkness” (Colossians 1:13). He truly “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The scriptures are consistent in their declaration that “no unclean thing can enter into [God’s] kingdom” (3 Nephi 27:19). In theory there are two ways by which men and women may inherit eternal life. The first is simply to live the law of God perfectly, to make no mistakes. To do so is to be justified—pronounced innocent, declared blameless—by works or by law. To say that another way, if we keep the commandments completely (including receiving the ordinances of salvation), never deviating from the strait and narrow path throughout our mortal lives, then we qualify for the blessings of the obedient. And yet we have just attended to the terrible truth that all are unclean as a result of sin. All of us have broken at least one of the laws of God and therefore disqualify ourselves for justification by law. Moral perfection may be a possibility, but it is certainly not a probability. Jesus alone trod that path. “Therefore,” Paul observed, “by the deeds of the law”—meaning the law of Moses, as well as any other law of God—“there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20; see also 2 Nephi 2:5).

The second way to be justified is by faith, for the sinner to be pronounced clean or innocent through trusting in and relying upon the merits of Him who answered the ends of the law (see Romans 10:4; see also 2 Nephi 2:6–7). Jesus, who owed no personal debt to justice, is that Holy One who can now “claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men” (Moroni 7:27). Because we are guilty of transgression, if there had been no Atonement, no quantity of good deeds on our part, no nobility independent of divine intercession could make up for the loss. Truly, “since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself” (Alma 22:14). Thus He who loved us first (see 1 John 4:10, 19) reaches out to the lost and fallen, to the disinherited, and proposes a marriage. The Infinite One joins with the finite, the Finished with the unfinished, the Whole with the partial, in short, the Perfect with the imperfect. Through covenant with Christ, and thus union with the Bridegroom, we place ourselves in a condition to become fully formed, whole, finished—to become perfect in Christ (see Moroni 10:32).

The means by which the Savior justifies us is wondrous indeed. It entails what might be called the great exchange. It is certainly true that Jesus seeks through His atoning sacrifice and through the medium of the Holy Spirit to change us, to transform us from fallen and helpless mortals into new creatures in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). But there is more. Jesus offers

to exchange with us. In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul speaks of his eagerness to forsake the allurements of the world in order to obtain the riches of Christ. "I count all things but loss," he said, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ"—and now note this important addition—"and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:8–9). Paul's point is vital: justification comes by faith, by trusting in Christ's righteousness, in His merits, mercy, and grace (see Romans 10:1–4; see also 2 Nephi 2:3; Helaman 14:13; D&C 45:3–5).

Though our efforts to be righteous are necessary, they will forevermore be insufficient. Paul teaches a profound truth—that as we come unto Christ by the covenant of faith, our Lord's righteousness becomes our righteousness. He justifies us in the sense that He imputes—meaning that He reckons to our account—His goodness and takes our sin. This is the great exchange. To the Corinthians, Paul explained that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. . . . For he [God the Father] hath made him [Christ the Son] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21). As Paul explained elsewhere, Christ "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13; see also Hebrews 2:9). Sidney Sperry thus spoke of being justified as a matter not only of "acquittal" from guilt and sin but also of "being regarded as 'righteous' in a future Divine judgment."³ Those who enter the gospel covenant and thereafter seek to do their duty and endure to the end the Lord "hold[s] guiltless" (3 Nephi 27:16; compare D&C 4:2). It is not that they are guiltless in the sense of never having done wrong; rather, the Holy One removes the blame and imputes—accounts or decrees to the repentant sinner, the one who comes unto Christ by covenant—His righteousness. "For as by one man's disobedience"—the Fall of Adam—"many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [Jesus Christ] shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

One Protestant theologian, John MacArthur, has written: "Justification may be defined as an act of God whereby he imputes to a believing sinner the full and perfect righteousness of Christ, forgiving the sinner of all unrighteousness, declaring him or her perfectly righteous in God's sight, thus delivering the believer from all condemnation. . . . It is a forensic

reality that takes place in the court of God.”⁴ MacArthur also explained: “Justification is a divine verdict of ‘not guilty—fully righteous.’ It is the reversal of God’s attitude toward the sinner. Whereas He formerly condemned, He now vindicates. Although the sinner once lived under God’s wrath, as a believer he or she is now under God’s blessing. Justification is more than simple pardon; pardon alone would still leave the sinner without merit before God. So when God justifies He imputes divine righteousness to the sinner. . . . Justification elevates the believer to a realm of full acceptance and divine privilege in Jesus Christ.” The harsh reality is that “the law demands perfection. But the only way to obtain perfect righteousness is by imputation—that is, being justified by faith.”⁵ “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1–2). Since all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we are “justified only by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” or in other words, “justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law” (JST, Romans 3:24, 28). The comforting message of the gospel is that Jesus the Messiah has, “according to his mercy,” offered to save us “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly . . . ; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5–7).

SALVATION BY GRACE

As we are all aware, the theological debate between whether we are saved by grace or by works has continued for centuries. In reality, it is a meaningless argument that radiates more heat than light. Perhaps because Latter-day Saints have been so hesitant to acknowledge any virtue in the argument that we are saved by grace alone, some of us have not taken the Apostle Paul seriously enough; sadly, we have too often robbed ourselves of sacred insights, understanding, and comfort to be found not only in the New Testament but also in the Book of Mormon.

Paul certainly understood that the works of righteousness are an important part of our salvation. He taught that God “will render to every man according to his deeds” (Romans 2:6). Of course we must receive the ordinances of salvation. Of course we must strive to live a life befitting that of our Christian covenant. Of course we must do all in our power to overcome sin, put off the natural man, and deny ourselves of all ungodliness.

These things evidence our part of the gospel covenant. They allow us, in fact, to remain in the covenant with Christ, even as we occasionally stumble and fall short of the ideal. The question is not whether good works are vital—they are. As we have already observed, they are not sufficient. The harder questions are: In whom do I trust? On whom do I rely? Is my reliance on Christ's works, or do I strive to save myself?

Paul asked: "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by the law of works, he hath to glory in himself; but not of God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him who is justified by the law of works, is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt. But to him that seeketh not to be justified by the law of works, but believeth on him who justifieth not the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (JST, Romans 4:1–5). Abraham's faith—his willingness to believe the promises of God, to trust in Jehovah's power to accomplish what to him seemed impossible, and thus to sacrifice Isaac—was what gained him the approval of the Almighty. It is with us as it was with Abraham; if in fact we are saved by our deeds and our merits alone, then we might have something about which to boast; namely, that our own genius, our own resources, our own righteousness were what allowed us to bound into glory.

It isn't that Paul believed that only those who do not work receive eternal life but rather that those who labor, knowing their own fallibility and limitations, never trust in their own works. Paul taught what James taught—that true faith is always manifest in righteous works and that one who relies wholly on the merits of Christ, who has faith in Him, will evidence that faith through noble actions and Christian conduct (see James 2). To argue that we are saved by our works is to argue that Christ's atoning mission was unnecessary. "I do not frustrate the grace of God," Paul wrote, "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). John MacArthur has suggested that the word *grace* makes an acronym for a glorious concept—"God's Riches at Christ's Expense."⁶

"How else could salvation possibly come?" Elder Bruce R. McConkie asked. "Can man save himself? Can he resurrect himself? Can he create a celestial kingdom and decree his own admission thereto? Salvation must and does originate with God, and if man is to receive it, God must bestow it upon him, which bestowal is a manifestation of grace. . . . Salvation does not come by the works and performances of the law of Moses, nor by

'circumcision,' nor by 'the law of commandments contained in ordinances' . . . , nor does it come by any good works standing alone. No matter how righteous a man might be, no matter how great and extensive his good works, he could not save himself. Salvation is in Christ and comes through his atonement."⁷

NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

Paul taught that to come unto Christ is to enter into a new realm of existence, a spiritual realm. It is to forsake death and come unto life, to put away evil and darkness and learn to walk in righteousness and light. "Know ye not," Paul asked the Romans, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:3-6).

The new life in Christ entails a new energy, a new dynamism, a new source of strength and power. That power is Christ. So often people simply go through the motions, do good and perform their duties but find little satisfaction in doing so. One Christian writer offered this thought:

There are few things quite so boring as being religious, but there is nothing quite so exciting as being a Christian!

Most folks have never discovered the difference between the one and the other, so that there are those who sincerely try to live a life they do not have, substituting religion for God, Christianity for Christ, and their own noble endeavors for the energy, joy, and power of the Holy Spirit. In the absence of reality, they can only grasp at ritual, stubbornly defending the latter in the absence of the former, lest they be found with neither!

They are lamps without oil, cars without gas, and pens without ink, baffled at their own impotence in the absence of all that alone can make man functional; for man was so engineered by God that the presence of the Creator within the creature is indispensable to His humanity. Christ gave Himself for us to give Himself to us! His presence puts God back into the man! He came that we might have life—God's life!

There are those who have a life they never live. They have come to Christ and thanked Him only for what He did, but do not live in the power of who He is. Between the Jesus who “was” and the Jesus who “will be” they live in a spiritual vacuum, trying with no little zeal to live for Christ a life that only He can live in and through them.⁸

The disciples of Jesus must strive to do what is right. They should do their duty in the Church and in the home, even when they are not eager to do so. They cannot just leave the work of the kingdom to others because they have not been changed and reborn. But that doesn’t mean they must always remain that way. Each of us may change; we can change; we should change; and it is the Lord who will change us. Coming unto Christ entails more than being cleansed, as important as that is. It entails being filled. We speak often of the importance of being cleansed, or sanctified. It is to have the Holy Spirit, who is not only a revelator but a sanctifier, remove filth and dross from our souls. We refer to this process as a baptism by fire. To be cleansed is essential, but to stop there is to stop short of great blessings. Paul presents the idea of (in a sense) nailing ourselves to the cross of Christ—nailing our old selves, the old man of sin. He wrote: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

This is a new life in Christ. To the Ephesian Saints, Paul wrote: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8–10). To the Hebrews, he said: “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ” (Hebrews 13:20–21). When we have been filled, the Spirit is with us and Christ comes to dwell in us through that Spirit. Then our works begin to be motivated by that Holy Spirit and they are no longer our works; they are His works.

The risen Lord said to the Nephites that certain things were required before a church would be truly His Church: it must have His name, and it must be built upon His gospel. If these two conditions are met, then the Father would show forth His own works in it (see 3 Nephi 27:5–10). How?

Through the body of Christ, through the members of the Church. The Father's Spirit motivates them to greater righteousness. It is not expected that we "go through the motions" all our lives. There can come a time when the Spirit changes our motives, desires, and yearnings, and we begin to do works the way God would do them, because He has now begun to live in us through that Spirit.

On one occasion Paul wrote: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." If we stop our reading there, and that's usually where we stop, we wonder about the phrase "work out your own salvation." How? There's not a person living on this earth who can work out his own salvation, if that entails doing so without divine assistance. There aren't enough home teaching visits; there aren't enough cakes and pies to be delivered to the neighbors; there aren't enough prayers to be uttered for a person to work out his own salvation. But Paul didn't stop there: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12–13). The works are the Lord's works through us, and thus we are doing not our works but His works.

Through the Atonement of Christ, we do more than enjoy a change of behavior; our nature is changed. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Isn't that what the angel taught King Benjamin—that the natural man is an enemy to God and will stay that way unless and until he yields himself to the enticings of the Holy Spirit? (see Mosiah 3:19). John Stott explained: "We may be quite sure that Christ-centredness and Christ-likeness will never be attained by our own unaided efforts. How can self drive out self? As well expect Satan to drive out Satan! For we are not interested in skin-deep holiness, in a merely external resemblance to Jesus Christ. We are not satisfied by a superficial modification of behaviour patterns. . . . No, what we long for is a deep inward change of character, resulting from a change of nature and leading to a radical change of conduct. In a word we want to be *like Christ*, and that thoroughly, profoundly, entirely. Nothing less than this will do."⁹

Elder Glenn L. Pace put it this way: "We should all be striving for a disposition to do no evil, but to do good continually. This isn't a resolve or a discipline; it is a disposition. We do things because we want to, not just because we know we should. . . . Sometimes we overlook the fact that a

spiritual transformation or metamorphosis must take place within us. It comes about through grace and by the Spirit of God, although it does not come about until we have truly repented. . . . My conclusion is that we will not be saved by works if those works are not born of a disposition to do good, as opposed to an obligation to do good.”¹⁰ That, of course, is what President Ezra Taft Benson meant when he taught that although the world deals in externals, the Lord works from the inside out.¹¹

Bob George, a Protestant writer, described the spiritual transformation this way:

Being made into a new creation is like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Originally an earthbound crawling creature, a caterpillar weaves a cocoon and is totally immersed in it. Then a marvelous process takes place, called metamorphosis. Finally a totally new creature—a butterfly—emerges. Once ground-bound, the butterfly can now soar above the earth. It now can view life from the sky downward. In the same way, as a new creature in Christ you must begin to see yourself as God sees you.

If you were to see a butterfly, it would never occur to you to say, “Hey, everybody! Come look at this good-looking converted worm!” Why not? After all, it *was* a worm. And it was “converted.” No, now it is a new creature, and you don’t think of it in terms of what it was. You see it as it is now—a butterfly.¹²

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Apostle Paul declared that one mark of true discipleship, one significant evidence of our growth into the new life in Christ, is the degree to which we enjoy the fruit of the Spirit. In three different books of scripture, the Lord discusses the gifts of the Spirit—such things as discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues, administration, prophecy, healing, and so forth. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul suggested that the gifts of the Spirit are intended to enhance, build up, and make perfect the body of Christ, meaning the Church. They are for the good of the Church and kingdom. In addition, Paul spoke of the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5, he contrasted the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and

such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19–21).

There is a natural birth, and there is a spiritual birth. The natural birth comes with mortality, and the natural birth creates the natural man. The spiritual birth comes later. The natural birth has its own set of fruits, or works. Paul mentioned several of them. The spiritual man or woman brings forth his or her own fruits. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22–25).

Some of the gifts we know as the gifts of the Spirit may have begun to develop within us before we came here.¹³ Many aptitudes, capacities, and talents may thus come quite naturally for us. For some, the gift of speaking or the gift of teaching comes naturally, and these are spiritual gifts. For others, discernment or wisdom is an integral part of their lives. But there are people who are wonderful speakers and poor Christians. There are people who do remarkable things in the classroom and hurtful things outside the classroom. Talk to their family, secretary, staff, or coworkers. The gifts of the Spirit are one thing, the fruit of the Spirit another. Patience, mercy, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering, and, of course, charity, or the pure love of Christ—these characterize men and women who have begun to live in Christ. Such persons are simply more Christlike. Elder Marion D. Hanks frequently asked a haunting question, one that strikes at the core of this matter of being Christlike. He would inquire, "If you were arrested and were to be tried for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?"

The interesting thing about the fruit of the Spirit is that attitudes and actions do not seem to be situational. In other words, a person is not just very fruitful in the Spirit only while the sun shines, pleasant and kindly only when circumstances are positive. Rather, those who enjoy the fruit of the Spirit feel "love for those who do not love in return, joy in the midst of painful circumstances, peace when something you were counting on doesn't come through, patience when things aren't going fast enough for you, kindness toward those who treat you unkindly, goodness toward those who have been intentionally insensitive to you, faithfulness when

friends have proved unfaithful, gentleness toward those who have handled you roughly, self-control in the midst of intense temptation."¹⁴

NOT ALL ISRAEL ARE ISRAEL

Once Christ came into his life, nothing was quite the same for Saul of Tarsus. The scriptures, our Old Testament, became a new book to him. He saw the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in and through all things, and he became a witness that all things bear testimony of the Redeemer (see Moses 6:63). Paul knew, for example, that the gathering of Israel was first and foremost a gathering to Christ and only secondarily a gathering to lands of inheritance. He taught that to be a true son or daughter of the covenant was to be fully Christian, to have accepted completely Jesus Christ, the mediator of God's new covenant with Israel. "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel," he pointed out. "Neither, because they are all children of Abraham, are they the seed" (JST, Romans 9:6–7). Descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was significant to the degree that one received the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Nephi's words, "As many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel" (2 Nephi 30:2).

In bearing witness of Christ, Paul drew upon the prophetic promise that through Abraham's seed all humanity would be blessed (see Genesis 12:1–3; 17:1–7; JST, Genesis 17:11–12). "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). Paul's point might be restated as follows: although it is certainly true that through Abraham's seed all nations would be blessed—meaning that through his endless posterity the blessings of the gospel, the priesthood, and eternal life would be dispensed to the world (see Abraham 2:8–11)—the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise came through the One who was truly the Chosen Seed, Jesus of Nazareth, son of David and thus son of Abraham (see Matthew 1:1–16).

Paul also taught that many of the performances and ordinances of the ancients (animal sacrifice being the most obvious) had their fulfillment and thus ultimate meaning in Christ and His redemption. For example, circumcision was given originally as a token of God's covenant with Abraham, a commandment that male children were to be circumcised at

eight days as a reminder that because of the Atonement little children are not accountable until they are eight years old (see JST, Genesis 17:11–12). “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly,” he wrote, “neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit” (Romans 2:28–29). Stated another way, “In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6). Truly, in Christ we “are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also [we] are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11–12).

In short, Paul’s message to those who took pride and license in their lineage was clear. He declared boldly that it is a blessed privilege to be a chosen people, to be heirs to the adoption, the glory, the covenants, and the promises (see Romans 9:4). But true heirship is to be secured through adoption into the family of the Lord Jesus Christ. “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:12–13). “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:26–29; see also Colossians 3:11).

A NAME ABOVE ALL OTHERS

Paul affirmed that Jesus Christ transcends all things, is superior to the gods of the pagans, has preeminence over the mystical deities of the Gnostics, and is, under the Eternal Father, the One before whom all creatures bow in humble reverence. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that he did not cease to “give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” The Apostle then added that the Father’s power had been “wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also

in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:16–17, 20–23).

Many of the ancients believed that names held power and that to know the name of a deity was to possess power with or over it. Paul let it be known that Christ was the name above all other names and that salvation, the greatest of all the gifts of God, was to be had only in and through that holy name. "Let this mind be in you," he pleaded with the Philippian Saints,

Which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11; compare Ephesians 3:15)

The united testimony of the Apostles and prophets is that God the Eternal Father has delivered us from the power of darkness and "translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature"—meaning, all creation—"for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. . . . For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1:13–17, 19; compare Hebrews 1:1–3). Thus in adoration and worship, Elder McConkie wrote:

The name of Jesus—wondrous name—the name in which the truths of salvation are taught; the name in which the ordinances of

salvation are performed; the name in which miracles are wrought, in which the dead are raised and mountains moved;

The name of Jesus—wondrous name—the name by which worlds come rolling into existence; the name by which redemption comes; the name which brings victory over the grave and raises the faithful to eternal life;

The name of Jesus—wondrous name—the name by which revelation comes and angels minister; the name of him by whom all things are and into whose hands the Father hath committed all things; the name of him to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess in that great day when the God of Heaven makes this planet his celestial home.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

I love the Apostle Paul. I love his personality—his wit, his charm, his firmness, his unquestioned allegiance to the Christ who called him. I love his breadth, his vision, his flexibility, and his capacity to be “all things to all men” (1 Corinthians 9:22). And, most important, I love his doctrine—particularly as revealed in his epistles, the timely but timeless messages in that regulatory correspondence by which he set in order the branches of the Church. Jesus of Nazareth, Savior and King, was the Lord of his life and the burden of his message to the world.

As he closed his last epistle, Paul said: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:6–8). The “chosen vessel” (Acts 9:15) ran the race of life and did all he had been commanded to do, namely, open the eyes of the people far and wide to the gospel of Jesus Christ and “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they [might] receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified” (Acts 26:18). And surely his was a glorious reunion with the Master whose name he had declared and whose gospel he had defended. In Christ, Paul found a newness of life, and through Christ, Paul inherited the greatest of all the gifts of God—that life which is eternal and everlasting.

NOTES

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3. Sidney B. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955), 176.
4. John F. MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 197.
5. John F. MacArthur, *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 89–90.
6. MacArthur, *Faith Works*, 57.
7. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965–73), 2:499–500.
8. W. Ian Thomas, foreword to Bob George, *Classic Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1989), n.p.
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10. Glenn L. Pace, *Spiritual Plateaus* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 62–63.
11. Ezra Taft Benson, "Born of God," *Ensign*, November 1985, 6.
12. George, *Classic Christianity*, 78.
13. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 4, 34, 359.
14. Charles Stanley, *The Wonderful, Spirit-Filled Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 108.
15. Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 300.