

Fruit That Remains

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Having the Holy Ghost seal our ordinances is essential if we want to have the promised blessings for all eternity.

As a young boy, I loved fresh, ripe peaches. To this day, the idea of biting into a juicy, ripe peach with its tangy flavor makes my mouth water. When fully matured peaches are picked, they last two to four days before they spoil. I have fond memories of joining with my mother and my siblings in our kitchen as we would preserve harvested peaches for the coming winter by sealing them in bottles. If we preserved the peaches correctly, this delicious fruit would last several years, not just two to four days. If properly prepared and heated, the fruit is preserved until the seal is broken.

Christ directed us to “go and bring forth fruit, ... that your fruit should remain.”¹ But He wasn’t speaking about peaches. He was talking about God’s blessings to His children. If we make and keep covenants with God, the blessings associated with our covenants can extend beyond this life and be sealed upon us, or preserved, forever, becoming fruit that remains for all eternity.

The Holy Ghost, in His divine role as the Holy Spirit of Promise, will seal each ordinance upon those who are faithful to their covenants so that it will be valid after mortality.² Having the Holy Ghost seal our ordinances is essential if we want to have the promised blessings for all eternity, becoming fruit that remains.

This is particularly important if we want to be exalted.³ As President Russell M. Nelson has taught, we should “begin with the end in mind. ... Surely, for each of us, the ‘end’ we would most like to achieve is to live forever with our families in an exalted state where we will be in the presence of God, our Heavenly Father, and His Son Jesus Christ.”⁴ President Nelson has also said: “Celestial marriage is a pivotal part of preparation for eternal life. It requires one to be married to the right person, in the right place, by the right authority, and to obey that sacred covenant faithfully. Then one may be assured of exaltation in the celestial kingdom of God.”⁵

What are the blessings of exaltation? They include dwelling in God’s presence for eternity together as husband and wife, inheriting “thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, ... and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever,”⁶ receiving all that God the Father has.⁷

The Lord revealed through Joseph Smith:

“In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

“And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

“And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

“He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase.”⁸

We learn here that one can be in the celestial kingdom, or dwell in the presence of God, and be single. But to be exalted in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, one must enter into marriage by the proper authority and then be true to the covenants made in that marriage. As we are faithful to these covenants, the Holy Spirit of Promise can seal our marriage covenant.⁹ Such sealed blessings become fruit that remains.

What is required to faithfully keep the new and everlasting covenant of marriage?

President Russell M. Nelson has taught there are two types of bonds when we enter into this eternal marriage covenant: a lateral bond between husband and wife, and a vertical bond with God.¹⁰ To have the blessings of exaltation sealed upon us and remain after this life, we must be true to both the lateral and the vertical bonds of the covenant.

To keep the lateral bond with your spouse, God has counseled us to “love [your] wife [or husband] with all [your] heart, and ... cleave unto her [or him] and none else.”¹¹ For those who are married, to cleave unto her or him and none else means you counsel together in love, you love and care for each other, you prioritize time with your spouse over outside interests, and you call upon God to help you overcome your weaknesses.¹² It also means there is no emotional intimacy or sexual relations of any kind outside of your marriage, including flirting or dating, and there is no pornography, which engenders lust.¹³

To keep the lateral bond in the covenant, each partner must desire to be in the marriage. President Dallin H. Oaks recently taught: “We also know that He [God] will force no one into a sealing relationship against his or her will. The blessings of a sealed relationship are assured for all who keep their covenants *but never by forcing a sealed relationship on another person who is unworthy or unwilling.*”¹⁴

What is the vertical bond referred to by President Nelson? The vertical bond is one we make with God.

To keep the vertical bond with God, we are true to the temple covenants we have made regarding the laws of obedience, sacrifice, the gospel, chastity, and consecration. We also covenant with God to receive our eternal companion and to be a righteous spouse and parent. As we keep the vertical bond, we qualify for the blessings of being part of the family of God through the Abrahamic covenant, including the blessings of posterity, the gospel, and the priesthood.¹⁵ These blessings are also the fruit that remains.

While we hope that all who enter into the new and everlasting covenant remain true and have the blessings sealed upon them for all eternity, sometimes that ideal seems beyond our reach. Throughout my ministry I have encountered members who make and keep covenants while their spouse does not. There are also those who are single, never having the opportunity to marry in mortality. And there are those who are not faithful in their marriage covenants. What happens to individuals in each of these circumstances?

1. If you remain faithful to the covenants you made when you were endowed, you will receive the personal blessings promised to you in the endowment *even if your spouse has broken his or her covenants or withdrawn from the marriage*. If you were sealed and later divorced, and if your sealing is not canceled, the personal blessings of that sealing remain in effect for you if you remain faithful.¹⁶

Sometimes, due to feelings of betrayal and very real hurt, a faithful spouse may want to cancel their sealing with their unfaithful spouse to get as far away as possible from them, both on earth and for eternity. If you are concerned that you will somehow be tied to an unrepentant former spouse, remember, *you will not!* God will not require anyone to remain in a sealed relationship throughout eternity against his or her will. Heavenly Father will ensure that we will receive every blessing that our desires and choices allow.¹⁷

However, if a cancellation of sealing is desired, agency is respected. Certain procedures can be followed. *But this should not be done casually!* The First Presidency holds the keys to bind on earth and in heaven. Once a sealing cancellation has been granted by the First Presidency, the blessings related to that sealing are no longer in force; they are canceled both laterally and vertically. It is important to understand that to receive the blessings of exaltation, we must demonstrate that we are willing to enter into and faithfully keep this new and everlasting covenant, either in this life or the next.

2. For those who are single members of the Church, please remember that “in the Lord’s own way and time, no blessings will be withheld from His faithful Saints. The Lord will judge and reward each individual according to heartfelt [desires] as well as deed.”¹⁸
3. If you have not remained faithful to temple covenants, is there hope? Yes! The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of hope. That hope comes through Jesus Christ with sincere repentance and obediently following Christ’s teachings. I have seen individuals make grave mistakes, breaking sacred covenants. On a regular basis, I see those who sincerely repent, are forgiven, and return to the covenant path. If you have broken your temple covenants, I urge you to turn to Jesus Christ, counsel with your bishop, repent, and open your soul to the *mighty* healing power available because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Brothers and sisters, our loving Heavenly Father has given us covenants so that we may have access to all that He has in store for us. These sacred blessings from God are more delicious than any earthly fruit. They can be preserved for us forever, becoming fruit that remains, as we are faithful to our covenants.

I testify that God has restored the authority to bind on earth and in heaven. That authority is found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is held by the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve and is exercised under the direction of President Russell M. Nelson. Those who enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage and keep that covenant can become perfected and eventually receive the fulness of the glory of the Father, regardless of circumstances beyond their control.¹⁹

These promised blessings appertaining to our covenants can be sealed upon us by the Holy Spirit of Promise and become fruit that remains forever and ever. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. John 15:16.
2. See Dale G. Renlund, “Accessing God’s Power through Covenants,” *Liahona*, May 2023, 35–38; Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
3. An ordinance is sealed when it is made valid both in heaven and on earth because it is performed by one having authority and is ratified by the Holy Ghost.

“We tend to think of the sealing authority as applying only to certain temple ordinances, but that authority is necessary to make any ordinance valid and binding beyond death. The sealing power confers a seal of legitimacy upon your baptism, for example, so that it is recognized here and in heaven. Ultimately, all priesthood ordinances are performed under the keys of the President of the Church, and as President Joseph Fielding Smith explained, ‘He [the President of the Church] has given us authority, he has put the sealing power in our priesthood, because he holds those keys’ [quoted by Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1944, 75]” (D. Todd Christofferson, “The Sealing Power,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 20).

“An act which is sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise is one which is ratified by the Holy Ghost; it is one which is approved by the Lord. ... No one can lie to the Holy Ghost and get by undetected. ... These principles also apply to every other ordinance and performance in the Church. Thus if both parties [in a marriage] are ‘just and true’ [Doctrine and Covenants 76:53], if they are worthy, a ratifying seal is placed on their temple marriage; if they are unworthy, they are not justified by the Spirit and the ratification of the Holy Ghost is withheld. Subsequent worthiness will put the seal in force, and unrighteousness will break any seal” (Bruce R. McConkie, “Holy Spirit of Promise,” in *Preparing for an Eternal Marriage Student Manual* [2003], 136).

“*The Holy Spirit of Promise is the Holy Ghost* who places the stamp of approval upon every ordinance: baptism, confirmation, ordination, marriage. *The promise is that the blessings will be received through faithfulness.* If a person violates a covenant, whether it be of baptism, ordination, marriage or anything else, the Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval, and the blessings will not be received. Every ordinance is sealed with a promise of a reward based upon faithfulness. The Holy Spirit withdraws the stamp of approval where covenants are broken” (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie [1954], 1:45).
4. Russell M. Nelson, *Heart of the Matter: What 100 Years of Living Have Taught Me* (2023), 15. All covenants must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise if they are to have force after the resurrection of the dead (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:7).
5. Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 94.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19.
7. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.

9. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–20. “That highest destination—exaltation in the celestial kingdom—is the focus of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Dallin H. Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 26).
10. “Just as marriages and families share a unique *lateral* bond [which] creates a special love, so does the new relationship formed when we bind ourselves by covenant *vertically* to ... God” when we enter into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage (Russell M. Nelson, *Heart of the Matter*, 41–42).
11. Doctrine and Covenants 42:22; see also *General Handbook: Serving in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 38.6.16. In discussing marriage here, I am referring to marriage according to God’s law, which defines marriage as the legal and lawful union between a man and a woman (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library).
12. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” Gospel Library.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 42:22–24.
14. Dallin H. Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory,” 29; emphasis added.
15. See Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11; 113:8; Abraham 2:9–11.
16. See *General Handbook*, 38.4.1.

While I was serving a full-time mission in Switzerland, my companion and I shared the gospel with a wonderful 60-year-old Swiss couple. As we taught this couple about the restored Church of Jesus Christ, the woman showed great interest in what we were teaching. Over the next few weeks, she gained a testimony of the reality that the Church of Jesus Christ was restored with correct authority from God and that Jesus Christ directs His Church through living prophets and apostles. We looked forward to teaching this couple about one of the most sublime doctrines of the Restoration, the opportunity for eternal marriage. Surprisingly, however, as we taught this couple about the doctrine of eternal marriage, the Swiss woman remarked that she had no interest in being with her husband for all eternity. To her, heaven did not include being with her husband, to whom she had been married for 36 years. This sister was baptized, but her husband was not. They were never sealed in the temple.

To many, however, heaven would not be heaven without being with the person to whom they are married. To be together with the spouse you love forever truly sounds like heaven. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland shared about his dear, beloved wife, Pat, heaven would not be heaven without her (see “Scott Taylor: For Elder Holland, Heaven without His Wife and Children ‘Wouldn’t Be Heaven for Me,’” *Church News*, July 22, 2023, [thechurchnews.com](https://www.thechurchnews.com)).

17. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory,” 26.
18. Russell M. Nelson, “Celestial Marriage,” 94.
19. See John 15:16.