

Divine Helps for Mortality

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Our Heavenly Father's plan provides helps to guide us through our mortal journeys.

I.

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed a few things about our pre-earth life. There we existed as spirit children of God. Because God desired to help His children progress, He decided to create an earth on which we could receive a body, learn through experience, develop divine attributes, and be proven to see if we would keep God's commandments. Those who qualified would "have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever" (Abraham 3:26).

To establish the conditions of this divine plan, God chose His Only Begotten Son to be our Savior. Lucifer, whose suggested alternative would destroy the agency of man, became Satan and was "cast down." Banished to the earth and denied the privilege of mortal life, Satan was permitted to attempt "to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto [God's] voice" (Moses 4:4).

Essential to God's great plan for the mortal growth of His children was for them to experience "opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11). Just as our physical muscles cannot be developed or maintained without straining against the law of gravity, so mortal growth requires us to strain against Satan's temptations and other mortal opposition. Most important for spiritual growth is the requirement to choose between good and evil. Those who choose good would progress toward their eternal destiny. Those who choose evil—as all would do in the various temptations of mortality—would need saving help, which a loving God designed to provide.

II.

By far, God's strongest mortal help was His provision of a Savior, Jesus Christ, who would suffer to pay the price and provide forgiveness for repented sins. That merciful and glorious Atonement explains why faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel. His Atonement "bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead" (Alma 42:23), and it "atone[s] for the sins of the

world” (Alma 34:8), erasing all of our repented sins and giving our Savior power to succor us in our mortal infirmities.

Beyond that glorious erasing of sins committed and being forgiven, the plan of a loving Father in Heaven provides many other gifts to protect us, including protecting us from sinning in the first place. Our mortal life always *begins* with a father and a mother. Ideally, both are present, with different gifts to guide our growth. If not, their absence is part of the opposition we must overcome.

III.

Our Heavenly Father’s plan provides other helps to guide us through our mortal journeys. I will speak of four of these. Please don’t hold me to my number of *four*, because these helps are overlapping. Moreover, there are other merciful protections in addition to these.

First, I speak of the Light or Spirit of Christ. In his great teaching in the book of Moroni, Moroni quotes his father that “the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil” (Moroni 7:16). We read this same teaching in modern revelations:

“And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:46).

Again: “For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the condemnation of the ungodly” (Doctrine and Covenants 136:33).

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained these scriptures: “The Lord has not left men (when they are born into this world) helpless, groping to find the light and truth, but every man ... is born with the right to receive the guidance, the instruction, the counsel of the Spirit of Christ, or Light of Truth.”

The *second* of the great assistances provided by the Lord to help us choose what is right is a cluster of divine directions in the scriptures as part of the plan of salvation (plan of happiness). These directions are commandments, ordinances, and covenants.

Commandments define the path our Heavenly Father has marked out for us to progress toward eternal life. People who imagine commandments as the way God decides who to punish fail to understand this purpose of God’s loving plan of happiness. On that path, we can gradually achieve the needed relationship with our Savior and qualify for an increase of His power to help us on our way to the destination He desires for all of us. Our Heavenly Father desires all of His children to return to the celestial kingdom, where God and our Savior reside, and to have the kind of life of those who reside in that celestial glory.

Ordinances and *covenants* are part of the law that defines the path to eternal life. Ordinances, and the sacred covenants we make with God through them, are required steps and essential

guardrails along that path. I like to think of the role of covenants as demonstrating that under God's plan, His highest blessings are given to those who promise in advance to keep certain commandments and who keep those promises.

Other God-given helps for making right choices are the *manifestations* of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. His function, defined in scripture, is to testify of the Father and the Son, to teach us, to bring all things to our remembrance, and to guide us into all truth. The scriptures include many descriptions of the manifestations of the Holy Ghost, such as a spiritual witness in response to an inquiry about the truth of the Book of Mormon. A manifestation is not to be confused with the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is conferred following baptism.

One of the most significant of God's helps for His faithful children is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The importance of this gift is evident in the fact that it is formally conferred after repentance and baptism by water, "and then [the scriptures explain] cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost" (2 Nephi 31:17). Persons who have this remission of sins—and then regularly renew their cleansing by daily repentance and living according to the covenants they make through the ordinance of the sacrament—qualify for the promise that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the Lord, "may always ... be with them" (Doctrine and Covenants 20:77).

Thus, President Joseph F. Smith taught that the Holy Ghost will "enlighten the minds of the people with regard to the things of God, to convince them at the time of their conversion of their having done the will of the Father, and to be in them an abiding testimony as a companion through life, acting as the sure and safe guide into all truth and filling them day by day with joy and gladness, with a disposition to do good to all men, to suffer wrong rather than to do wrong, to be kind and merciful, long suffering and charitable. All who possess this inestimable gift, this pearl of great price, have a continual thirst after righteousness. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit," President Smith concluded, "no mortal can walk in the straight and narrow way."

IV.

With so many powerful helps to guide us in our mortal journeys, it is disappointing that so many remain unprepared for their appointed meeting with our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. His parable of the ten virgins, spoken of so frequently in this conference, suggests that of those invited to meet Him, only half will be prepared.

We all know examples of the unprepared: returned missionaries who have interrupted their spiritual growth by periods of inactivity, youth who have jeopardized their spiritual growth by separating themselves from Church teaching and activities, men who have postponed their ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood, men and women—sometimes the posterity of noble pioneers or worthy parents—who have departed the covenant path short of making and keeping covenants in the holy temple.

Many of such deviations occur when members fail to follow the fundamental spiritual maintenance plan of personal prayer, regular scripture study, and frequent repentance. In contrast, some neglect weekly renewal of covenants by not partaking of the sacrament. Some say the Church is not meeting their needs; those substitute what they perceive as their future needs ahead of what the Lord has provided in His many teachings and opportunities for our essential service to others.

Humility and trust in the Lord are the remedies for such deviations. As the Book of Mormon teaches, the Lord “doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him” (Helaman 12:1). Trusting in the Lord is a particular need for all who wrongly measure the commandments of God and the teachings of His prophets against the latest findings and wisdom of man.

I have spoken of the many mortal helps our loving Father in Heaven has given to help His children return to Him. Our part in this divine plan is to trust in God and seek and use these divine helps, most notably the Atonement of His Beloved Son, our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. I pray that we will teach and live these principles, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.