

Jesus Christ Is the Truth—Enduring to the End (Part One)

Lawrence E. Corbridge
“Stand Forever” Episode 25

As I have said before, the big picture is a big deal. Few things provide greater comfort, confidence, and clarity, than looking beyond present cares to see and remember the big picture. You may live life in the weeds, but if you don’t see beyond them, you will think life is only weeds. When we stand back, the big picture looks like this:

- A. The essential problem in life is separation from God Our Father.**
 - Without God, chaos, darkness, and death prevail.
- B. Jesus Christ bridges the gap if we will believe and follow Him to the end and help others do the same.**
 - He is the Way offsetting chaos, the Truth offsetting darkness, and the Life offsetting death.
- C. Therefore, cross the bridge and close the gap; Believe and follow Christ to the end and help others do the same.**

That is the big picture and the primary framework for this series. The course to follow Christ and close the gap is His Gospel, meaning to have faith in Him, repent, receive ordinances beginning with baptism, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure to the end engaged in His work. Today we focus on the last coordinate on that journey, i.e., enduring to the end.

Enduring to the end

Among various scriptural statements about what is necessary to receive the gift of God’s life—eternal life—the common denominator is faithfulness, enduring to the end. Here are a few examples:

- “Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye

shall **press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.**"¹

- "And I know that the Lord God will consecrate my prayers for the gain of my people. And the words which I have written in weakness will be made strong unto them; for it persuadeth them to do good; it maketh known unto them of their fathers; and it speaketh of Jesus, and persuadeth them to **believe in him, and to endure to the end, which is life eternal.**"²
- "[T]hen, my beloved brethren, **repent ye, and enter in at the strait gate, and continue in the way which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life.**"³
- "And behold, he [Alma] preached the word unto your fathers and a mighty change was also wrought in their hearts, and they humbled themselves and put their trust in the true and living God. And behold, **they were faithful until the end; therefore they were saved.**"⁴
- "Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for **unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.**"⁵
- "And, 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."⁶
- "But **blessed are they who are faithful and endure**, whether in life or in death, **for they shall inherit eternal life.**"⁷ This declaration to "endure, whether in life or in death" is especially intriguing, suggesting the same process of enduring continues beyond the veil.

Enduring to the end is about getting to the end. It is about finishing. It is not gritting your teeth, gutting it out, biting the bullet, looking forward to a brighter, happier day, and it's not just not smoking until you die. It is to do whatever is necessary to receive and follow the Holy Ghost, building up the kingdom of God as an active, contributing member of the Church of Jesus Christ, beginning in your home, making a difference,

¹ 2 Nephi 31:20, *emphasis added*

² 2 Nephi 33:4, *emphasis added*

³ Jacob 6:11-12, *emphasis added*

⁴ Alma 5:13, *emphasis added*

⁵ 3 Nephi 15:9, *emphasis added*

⁶ Doctrine and Covenants 14:7, *emphasis added*

⁷ Doctrine and Covenants 50:5, *emphasis added*

and never, ever, ever quitting. Enduring to the end is to stay the course and finish. It is dogged faithfulness.

Yesterday's accomplishments, good deeds, and triumphs should be remembered and cherished, but they are in the past. Yesterday's mistakes should be remembered long enough to not repeat them, but they are in the past. Some people mistakenly live there, in the past either reliving, rethinking mistakes, or coasting on past successes or labors.

What you did in the past, good or bad, is not nearly as important as what you do today. Johnny Kelley, an American long-distance runner who competed in the summer Olympics of 1936 and 1948 and continued running throughout his life, is reported to have said: "It's not what you once did that counts the most, but what you keep doing." That's a key—what you keep doing.

Never Give Up

While we rejoice in the light of day, we should not be afraid of the dark. For as much as we aspire to the warmth and clarity of light, darkness cannot be wholly avoided. God did not do away with darkness. Rather, He introduced light where there was only darkness and divided the light from the darkness. We live in a recurring cycle of day and night. Without darkness we cannot appreciate light.

But if you are on the path, pressing forward, you need not be afraid of the dark. And make no mistake, darkness comes. The most profound truths and most brilliant shards of light are often revealed in the depths of darkness and the extremity of struggle.

Never was there darkness like the darkness of Gethsemane. To borrow Paul's words, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," all that God suffered (both Father and Son) when all darkness and evil bore down on One Solitary Soul, the Son of Man. Never a night so dark, never evil so malevolent, never suffering so awful, never a burden so great, never survival so unlikely and never One so alone, as when all of it raged in diabolic force pressing down on only One. Not only was the Light of the World not spared darkness, He experienced and comprehends all of it.

Satan's resolve was to break Him, but the Lord not only bore it but accomplished the greatest work of all eternity, the work of salvation, Atonement for the sins, suffering, pains, afflictions, temptations, sicknesses, death, and infirmities of all mankind in the

worst of all conditions.⁸ The greatest work of all time and eternity was done not in sunshining moments of great inspiration but in the depths of total despair and darkness. Considering what He endured, we can also endure whatever burdens we bear. We can “reach breaking points without breaking.”⁹ And be better for it in the end.

The “strait and narrow path” does not go around the mist of darkness but through it. If you are on the path, pressing forward, clinging to the rod of iron, don’t be afraid of the dark or necessarily conclude something has gone awry when you are in it. You will get through and be better for it if you hold fast to the rod of iron and press on.

During some of the darkest times in my life, one thing I learned was to never give up. Here is a journal entry from the depths of despair many years ago:

Never, never give up. When we speak of “opposition,” we usually mean temptation or the polar opposition of good and evil, but truth is, there is much opposition that has no moral implication, no association with right and wrong. Someone is lonely, another afraid, a child dies, someone diagnosed with debilitating or terminal illness, health fails, a job is lost, another drunk driver takes another vibrant and brilliant life. And on, and on, and on. No temptation to curse God or do evil. No impulse to lie, cheat, or steal. No thought to harm another or to succumb to an immoral impulse. Just the burden of life’s ills bearing down relentlessly, pressing down, weighing, and grinding down until you can hardly breathe, and you wonder how to go on. Forget about evil, you just wonder how to survive. If it is part of God’s design, what is the point of so much suffering and hardship that seems to have little to do with good and evil?

It may be that, like the muscle that is strengthened, bearing up greater weight more consistently, the strength that develops in time in direct proportion to the greater weight and the regularity of resistance, we too become spiritually strengthened the more constantly we lift and bear up underneath increasingly greater weight of opposition.

However, at some point the weight becomes simply more than we can lift. Try as we might, it is just too heavy. What then? Give up or go on. But if it is go on, how? You just do it. Go on anyway. You can always go farther than what you

⁸ Alma 7:11-13

⁹ Neal A. Maxwell, *But for a Small Moment*, BYU Devotional, September 1, 1974

think. Never give up. Never quit. It is there we meet the Lord. There, at the end when the weight is too heavy to bear. There He is.

“Out of Small Things”

One of the overarching purposes of enduring to the end is to become fruitful. It isn’t just about faithfulness, but fruitfulness, making a difference. But how?

The Lord said, “Wherefore, be not weary in well doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.”¹⁰ Alma similarly said, “that by small and simple things are great things brought to pass.”¹¹

This is a profoundly inspiring truth. The Lord has not said, “by grand and complicated things are great things brought to pass” rather “small and simple things.” This is true as to what makes a difference in our lives and how we can make a difference in the lives of others as well, whether for good or evil.

A burning bush, parting the Red Sea, or the appearance of angels may not be as life-changing as smaller and more simple things.

One man said about his experience of recovering from divorce and the loss of privileges as a member of the Church: “Destroying God’s trust in me was the lowest that I have ever been A bishop that I visited with mentioned the importance of fasting and praying. I began to fast every Sunday for the ability to forgive myself and believe that the atonement could pick me up and clean my horrible stains. I felt worthless inside, and a failure in many different ways. Doing this changed me, my heart changed, my thought processes changed, and I realized God still loved me and had a plan for me” — small and simple things.

A woman long-estranged from the Church said, “As soon as I walked back in the church, I felt a welcoming that I have never experienced before” — small and simple things.

Another woman, angry at God because of the abuse she suffered as a child and later as a wife, knelt in her closet: “I sat there in anger trembling, trying to find the words to express the hurt and anger in my heart. I remember angrily praying one of the most honest prayers I’ve ever prayed. Instantly I felt the most incredible peace and

¹⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 64:33

¹¹ Alma 37:6

indescribable love I have ever felt. I knew for the very first time in my life that my Father in Heaven knew ME and my pain. I knew at that moment I was indeed His daughter and He had such an incredible love for me. ... Every bit of anger towards Heavenly Father was instantly replaced with love and gratitude." By small and simple things, great things come to pass.

A man explained why his marriage failed: "Frankly I have spent many hours pondering on what went wrong. The first few years I tried to fix blame on the circumstances. At times I blamed my ex-wife, sometimes I blamed my career choice, other times I blamed the market conditions. It wasn't until many years later that I realized that it was all my fault. I did not strengthen my testimony by going to church and renewing my covenants. I did not read the scriptures daily nor ponder and study the gospel principles. I did not attend the temple and strive to live my life so that I could have a temple recommend. I got carried away in the ways of the world and chased after material things."

That small and simple things bring about great things is a truth that cuts both ways, positively and negatively. For those who always pray, who treasure up the words of life continually, who have faith in God Our Father and Jesus Christ, who repent, worthily receive ordinances, receive the Holy Ghost, work to build up the kingdom of God, and are true and faithful to their covenants, are "great things brought to pass." They receive the greatest things—God's Son, His Spirit, and His life.

I know of no one who, while doing those small things, woke up one morning thinking "Oh my heck, the Church isn't true; it's all a hoax" or "there is no God" or who decided to lie, cheat, steal, or commit adultery that day. Conversely, those who neglect any of those small and simple things, weaken in faith and gravitate toward chaos, darkness, and death. To borrow a phrase from Moroni, they "dwindle in unbelief."¹² Do the little things and thrive; neglect them and die.

"That by small and simple things are great things brought to pass" is a truth that applies not only as to how you may be blessed but also how you may bless others.¹³ You have great capacity to do good, usually by small and simple things. You absolutely can make a difference.

People often doubt they can make a difference, be an influence for good. Those doubts arise for various reasons, but they are always wrong. One of the great under-

¹² Mormon 9:20

¹³ Alma 37:6

estimations of life is how much we are influenced by others, and our incredible capacity to influence other people, especially family members.

A woman estranged from the Church and hateful toward God and everyone else was helped on her journey back by missionaries who never spoke to her. She said, “my experience with protesters in Utah and the missionaries’ reaction to them showed me a love that I am still working on and that I would like to be able to show to all.”

Missionaries will never know the great good they do as disciples of Christ at all times and in all places. Even when they are not teaching, they are teaching by small and simple things. They just don’t know it.

A stake president said of a man who struggled with pornography throughout his life: “After meeting his fiancé he seemed to find the hope he had been lacking. He found someone who seemed to believe in him, which sparked a hope in him and the future possibilities of an eternal family. He found a reason to fight the addictions and temptations that imprisoned him.

“The many words of counsel and pleading from his parents and Bishop gained some credibility in his mind. He began to trust in the things he had been taught in his youth. The familiar spirit began to teach and reteach him of his loving Heavenly Father and his Savior Jesus Christ. He began to not only attend the 12-step program, but it became a part of his life. ... When I asked him what he would do if this relationship with his fiancé were terminated, he testified with tears in his eyes that it would not change the direction he was going, nor the truth he has found.” By small and simple things, great things come to pass.

A man said, “If it hadn’t been for my faithful, loving wife (who doggedly and unceasingly believed that the good side of me) was and is my true self, and the power of the Atonement, I don’t know where I would be today.” Small and simple things.

Another said, “I have been blessed with a wonderful woman that helped me to heal and forgive myself. She brought light and hope to my life and with the help of her unconditional love, the guidance of my stake and ward leaders, and the blessings of the Lord, it has been possible for me to complete my disciplinary process and become an active member of the church.” Small and simple things.

A woman said, “After I remarried, I learned what true love really is. I learned what it was like to have someone treat me tenderly, with kindness, and concern for my feelings. I learned that everything that went wrong in the household wasn’t my fault. When I

make a mistake, my husband is so kind and loving, and helps me feel appreciated regardless.”

Small and simple things can also discourage and weaken faith.

A woman said of her prior husband: “I sincerely feel that the moment the internet and cell phones invaded our lives, it was then that I lost him. He was there physically but in every other capacity, he was not. I remember a few years before our divorce begging him for attention and courtship to no avail. I then became resentful when he had not said two words to me all day, or for weeks or even months. The mundane, routine was always discussed but never anything of meaning. The last several years of our marriage we shared a roof, but not a life.” Small and simple things.

A young woman developed a serious eating disorder, claiming she was never able to please her mother. As much as she tried, her mother compared her accomplishments with those of a sibling, and she never measured up in the eyes of the mother.

A very common thread throughout troubled marriages is the lack of self-worth and self-respect that comes from belittling, demeaning, dismissive comments, and actions of one spouse about the other. A marriage failed because of a wife’s adultery, low self-worth and a husband who was controlling, manipulative, and demeaning. She stopped attending church and began drinking alcohol. Without excusing her choices, one wonders what would have been the outcome if she had been treated differently by her husband.

A man said of his wife: “I was constantly reminded how I fell short of her expectations. I tried so hard to make her proud of me. I wanted more than anything just to get some sort of praise or recognition. It did not matter how well I did, I never heard any praise or encouragement from her. It felt like she took every opportunity to take a jab at me when I made a mistake. I’ve always tried not to let what others think or say about me hurt me, but *it really did hurt when it came from her.*” She was probably trying to motivate him to do better, but it didn’t work—by small and simple things, it didn’t work.

A woman said of her deceased husband: “When we were in the company of others, he would very often dominate the conversation. I did not feel acknowledged nor encouraged. After he died, I came to realize that I did not know who I was. I would often hear myself refer to what he said or did, not what I felt or thought.”

Over the years of reading the life stories of many people seeking redemption there was never once an instance of a single individual that did not involve other people. The

damage from sin is never limited to the sinner alone. There is always collateral damage that hurts others as well. Conversely, the blessings that flow from obedience to God's commandments is a river so wide it washes over the obedient child and splashes those nearby as well.

The Incredible Power of a Spouse or Parent

Except for Heavenly Father, no one has greater capacity to inspire and lift or demoralize and defeat than a spouse or a parent. One of the greatest responsibilities we have in mortality is to use that power for good, to build others up, especially those who are closest to us.

We build others by turning toward them, giving them our attention, connecting with them, looking at them in their eyes, and helping when we can. We build others by living and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. We build others and the kingdom of God as the Lord said, "by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love unfeigned; by kindness, and pure knowledge, reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy; that he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death."¹⁴

All interactions, especially with family members, either lift, strengthen, and edify or discourage and weaken. There may not be any neutral interaction. "And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness."¹⁵

We sing, "We are sowing, daily sowing, countless seeds of good and ill ... by a whisper sow we blessings; by a breath we scatter strife. In our words and thoughts and actions lie the seeds of death and life."¹⁶

We are always sowing seeds. We cannot live, take up space on this planet, and not make a difference. The Lord said, "he that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth."¹⁷ We either gather or scatter. One or the other. Even one who does nothing makes a difference by evoking indifference, influencing others to do nothing as well and by foregoing all the good that would otherwise emerge in small and simple ways.

¹⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 121:40-44

¹⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 50:23

¹⁶ "We Are Sowing," Hymn #216

¹⁷ Luke 11:23

No one is inconsequential. Everyone makes a difference. The only question is whether the countless seeds you sow will be for good or ill. If we are always sowing countless seeds, why not sow seeds of good? Each of us makes a difference; let it be for good.

Build Up the Kingdom of God.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the great stone rolling forth throughout the world. It is the kingdom of God on earth. His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. It is His Church, but it is also our Church because He gives it to us that His work, kingdom, power, and glory be ours as well.

His Church is not The Church of Jesus Christ of the Prophets of the Latter-days or the Priesthood of the Latter-days. It is The Church of Jesus Christ of all its members of every man and woman, every boy and girl. It is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

When He named His Church, He put our name next to His. Do you see that? It is there for all to see, high up on the grand marquis. He gives us equal billing with Him. He makes us co-stars with Him, that we be co-workers with Him, that we become co-heirs with Him.

Embedded in the name of the Church is an invitation to become one with Christ by engaging in His work. That is at the heart of enduring to the end. If you want to get close to the Lord, engage in His work.

The many prophecies and signs of the Lord's Second Coming reveal two contrasting truths (one bad and the other good) which lead to a single conclusion. First the bad news:

- A. **The Bad News:** Conditions in the world generally will worsen regardless of what we may do. The downward slide of mankind and nations is not predestined but has been foreseen and foretold throughout the ages. There are over 2000 scriptural prophecies regarding the signs of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ!¹⁸ Similar to the prophecies about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the conditions of our day have been more clearly and extensively

¹⁸ Old Testament (538), New Testament (331), Book of Mormon (588), Doctrine and Covenants (602), Pearl of Great Price (33). Data from www.scripturecreations.com

previewed and prophesied than any other time in order that we may be forewarned, prepared, and recognize the signs of the times for what they are.

Among those signs, the Lord said there will be “distress of nations, with perplexity” and “men’s hearts failing them for fear.”¹⁹ Every day the media report nations in distress whose leaders and people are perplexed; they don’t know what to do. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men can’t put it together again. And every day people lose heart, lose hope, and fall into despair. The conditions of the world are temporary,²⁰ and we will not change those conditions much or turn the tide of human events on a global scale.

- B. **The Good News:** By contrast, the kingdom of God will stand forever. That kingdom (including families) is eternal (it will not pass away) and is greatly influenced by what we do. God’s kingdom has been established once again in our day, never to be destroyed. It shall stand forever, and it is greatly affected by what faithful saints do everywhere, in every corner of the world.
- C. **Conclusion:** “Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”²¹ Seek first to strengthen families, the saints, and the rising generation, proclaim the gospel, care for the poor and redeem the dead, and strengthen the Church, which will increasingly become an ensign to all nations, a city set upon a hill.²² Focus more on saving souls than saving the world.

This is not to say we should be uninvolved, passive, apathetic, fatalistic, pessimistic, or defeatist regarding the affairs of mankind. Rather, as members of the Church we should first concentrate and consecrate ourselves, along with our limited time and means, where they will do the greatest good both in time and eternity.

That’s what Jesus Christ did. It is no wonder He came to earth during the height of the Roman Empire, possibly the most brutal, authoritarian governmental regime in the history of the world. And yet, He did little if anything to push off the heavy boot of Rome from the neck of the people, much to the disappointment of many. To the

¹⁹ Luke 21:25-26

²⁰ 1 John 2:17

²¹ JST Matt. 6:38

²² See Isaiah 5:26-27

contrary, He said, "Render ... unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's,"²³ and He paid taxes.²⁴

Instead, Christ concentrated and consecrated Himself, all that He had and was, His time and means, where it would do *the greatest good both in time and eternity*. He went about teaching and preaching, healing the sick, and ministering to people. He focused on saving souls more than saving the world. He gave Himself to His Father's work, and He invites us to do the same. He said, "the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do."²⁵

He also said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."²⁶ The Lord invites us to do as He did, build up the kingdom of God on earth, proclaim and extend the blessings of His gospel to all people on both sides of the veil, and given the (the size of His army and the) means of communication and transportation available today, our works may even be "greater" as He said, by reaching farther than what has ever been possible before, even to the ends of the earth. And if that were not enough, with hundreds of temples spanning the globe an untold number of ordinances are performed for the vast majority of God's children who could not receive them while in mortality. As saints everywhere labor to build the kingdom, all nations of the earth will be blessed through the seed of Israel in fulfillment of "the promises made to the fathers."²⁷

The Lord said, "I am able to do mine own work."²⁸ He explained that if the shepherds of Israel do not gather, care, and feed His scattered sheep, the shepherds will suffer, but the Lord will seek out His sheep, He will deliver them, and He will feed them.²⁹ "His purposes fail not, neither are there any who can stay his hand."³⁰

One might wonder, therefore, why engage in God's work if He will do it anyway better than we? Some view their service as a favor they render to God, helping God out with His work. That view sees service as a burden rather than a blessing. It produces token and sporadic service and eventually "burnout," and yet the Lord has promised: "And any man that shall go and preach this gospel of the kingdom, and fail not to

²³ Matthew 22:21

²⁴ Matthew 17:24-27

²⁵ 3 Nephi 27:21

²⁶ John 14:12

²⁷ Pearl of Great Price, JSH 1:36-39

²⁸ 2 Nephi 27:20

²⁹ Ezekiel 34

³⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 76:3

continue faithful in all things, **shall not be weary in mind**, neither darkened, neither in body, limb, nor joint; and a hair of his head shall not fall to the ground unnoticed. And they shall not go hungry, neither athirst.”³¹

Those who engage in the work of the Lord and view their contribution as a favor they render to God, those who view it as a burden, as a sacrifice, do eventually become “weary in mind ... darkened” and burn out.

God does not engage us in His work to help Him but rather to help us. “And how blessed are they who have labored diligently in his vineyard.”³² It is never a burden, rather a blessing, an unspeakable privilege, to be engaged in the work of God. What greater work could there be?

There are two consequences that always flow from engagement in God’s work and building up the Church; they are the greatest of God’s gifts.

For example, the Lord said, “Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day. Therefore, if ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work; For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul; Ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Amen.”³³

He also has repeatedly said this: “Behold, the field is white already to harvest; therefore, whoso desireth to reap let him thrust in his sickle with his might, and reap while the day lasts, that he may treasure up for his soul everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God. Yea, whosoever will thrust in his sickle and reap, the same is called of God. Therefore, if you will ask of me you shall receive; if you will knock it shall be opened unto you. Now, as you have asked, behold, I say unto you, keep my commandments, and seek to bring forth and establish the cause of Zion.”³⁴

On another occasion the Lord said, “Therefore, thrust in your sickle with all your soul, and your sins are forgiven you.”³⁵

³¹ Doctrine and Covenants 84:80, *emphasis added*

³² Jacob 6:3

³³ Doctrine and Covenants 4:2-4, 7, *emphasis added*

³⁴ Doctrine and Covenants 6:3-6, *emphasis added*. The same words and promises are repeated in Doctrine and Covenants 11:2-3; 12:1-5; 14:3-7, as well as several other places.

³⁵ Doctrine and Covenants 31:5

One might reasonably expect a different admonition, like thrust in your sickle with your might to save the souls of other men, that they may ask and receive. But the promise is rather your salvation, your redemption, “that ye may stand blameless,” and receive answers to your prayers (personal revelation).

The Lord asked, “How long can rolling waters remain impure?” [I suggest “rolling waters” represents continual engagement in the work of the Lord.] What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.”³⁶

The Lord said it most clearly to Nephi: “And blessed are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost; and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace, yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be.”³⁷

There are always two consequences that flow from engagement in God’s work and building up the Church, “the gift and power of the Holy Ghost” and eternal life. God’s greatest gifts are His Son, His Spirit, and His life. When you engage in the work of His Son, the other two gifts are the result.

Some step back from committed activity and service in the Church. “I don’t need the Church to teach my children good moral principles” they say. Others may rightly say, “there are good people everywhere, in every faith and walk of life. I don’t need the Church to be a good person. Other people seem to be happy, so why do I need the Church?”

Those sentiments align with a growing trend, generally, cutting across all religions to withdraw and not return even after marriage and children. More people are not only concluding they do not need religion to be a good person and teach moral principles to their children, but they also view religion in conflict with their heightened and exaggerated worship at the throne of tolerance and do not view organized religion as made in the image of that god. They see religion as intolerant and therefore not worthy of affiliation.

Although that kind of thinking is grounded in some truth, it leads to a false conclusion because it is also based on two fallacies. The first is the misunderstanding and narrow

³⁶ Doctrine and Covenants 121:33

³⁷ 1 Nephi 13:37

obsession with tolerance above everything else, even God. The second problem is that it misperceives the purpose of the Church.

It is true there are good people everywhere, and members of the Church have no corner on goodness. If the only purpose of the Church is to make bad men good, and good men better, then we might all look for another path less rigorous, because make no mistake the Lord requires all we have, time, talents and even our will, to build up His kingdom. Almost all religions coincide with the common purpose to improve mankind.

If, however, the purpose of the Church is more, much more, if its purpose is to make available in full measure the gift of God's Son, Jesus Christ, including the blessings of redemption of sin by His Atonement and the fulness of His gospel, if the purpose of the Church is to confer the gift of God's Spirit and engage His children in His work, if it is to seal families together eternally and ultimately confer the gift of God's life, eternal life, to His children on both sides of the veil, then it not only makes a great deal of difference to which Church you belong but how thoroughly you engage in its work and how long you stay.

We qualify initially for the gift of the Holy Ghost by faith in Christ, repentance, baptism for the remission of sins, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Gospel of Jesus Christ sets the course, but we retain a remission of our sins, and the companionship of the Holy Ghost to ultimately receive eternal life, by enduring to the end engaged in God's work as active, contributing members of His Church. An integral part of enduring to the end, is building up the kingdom of God.

"And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard sent his servant; and the servant went and did as the Lord had commanded him, and brought other servants; and they were few. And the Lord of the vineyard said unto them: *Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might.* For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and *if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit* which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come. And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights; and *the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them*; and they did obey the commandments of the Lord of the vineyard in all things.

"And it came to pass that when the Lord of the vineyard saw that his fruit was good, and that his vineyard was no more corrupt, he called up his servants, and said unto them: Behold, for this last time have *we nourished my vineyard*; and thou beholdest that I have done according to my will; and I have preserved the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning. *And blessed art thou; for because ye have been diligent in*

*laboring with me in my vineyard, and have kept my commandments, and have brought unto me again the natural fruit, that my vineyard is no more corrupted, and the bad is cast away, behold ye shall have joy with me because of the fruit of my vineyard.”*³⁸

Those who endure to the end seeking “to bring forth Zion” shall receive God’s greatest gifts, His Son, His Spirit, and His life. If you want to get close to God, engage in His work. In the next episode we will continue our discussion about enduring to the end. Please join me then.

³⁸ Jacob 5:70-73, 75, *emphasis added*