Jesus Christ Is the Life – Atonement
Part Two
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"Stand Forever" Episode 38

If you were to sum up life's purpose in one word, what word would you choose? Love, peace, fruitfulness, fulfillment, character, knowledge? You can find good scriptural and prophetic support for "joy," even better support for "Christ." What word would you choose?

Hello, I am Larry Corbridge, and this is Episode 38 of the *Stand Forever Series*. We have considered Christ as the Way and the Truth. Today we continue our focus on Jesus Christ as the Life. In Episode 12 of this series, I asked what two words you would choose as a guide for life. I offered "choose best" for consideration. Today, I ask if you were to sum up life's purpose in one word, what word would you choose?

How about "life?" Perhaps, life. The purpose of life is life. It is life before, life now, spiritual life and eternal life, and it may be the most vital of the four is spiritual life. We lived before in preparation for life now. We live now that we might be born again into spiritual life leading to eternal life, the greatest of the gifts of God. The purpose of life is life.

The Lord said, "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you …. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the lord your God hath commanded you**, that ye may live**."[1] And, **"**Love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, **that thou mayest live**."[2] Speaking of His sheep, those who enter His fold, Christ said, "I am come **that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly**,"[3] not the "abundant life," but more of life, God's Spirit more abundantly.

Alma said to his son Helaman, "**look to god and live**."[4] Helman took it so much to heart that his son Nephi would later say to the people of his time: "even so as many as should look upon the Son of God with faith, having a contrite spirit, **might live**, even unto that life which is eternal."[5]

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[1] Deuteronomy 5:32,33, *emphasis added*
[2] Deuteronomy 30:6, *emphasis added*
[3] John 10:10, *emphasis added*
[4] Alma 37:47, *emphasis added*
[5] Helaman 8:15, *emphasis added*

The destination on which we should fix our course is the tree of life. "Behold, he sendeth an invitation unto all men, for the arms of mercy are extended towards them, and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you. Yea, he saith: Come unto me and ye shall partake of the fruit of the tree of life; yea, ye shall **eat and drink of the bread and the waters of life freely**."[6]

The resurrected Christ declared: "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."[7]

The purpose of the gospel is life. "Verily I say unto you, blessed are you for receiving mine everlasting covenant, even the fulness of my gospel, sent forth unto the children of men, **that they might have life** and be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days, as it was written by the prophets and apostles in days of old."[8] God's eternal plan for His children is to live—life over death. Nephi said, "And also my soul delighteth in the covenants of the Lord which he hath made to our fathers; yea, my soul delighteth in his grace, and in his justice, and power, and mercy in the **great and eternal plan of deliverance from death**."[9]

The Lord said He was prepared from before the world that all have life and have life eternally. "Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold, I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. **In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally**, even they who shall believe on my name; and they shall become my sons and my daughters."[10]

We enjoy the wonder of physical life with each beat of our hearts. Life is precious. Life is sacred. While most are endowed with procreative power, no one can create life. Birth, although commonplace, is one of life's greatest miracles. Accordingly, the divine powers of procreation are sacred and are to be used as the Giver of Life intends. Tampering with those powers other than as prescribed by God is a perversion and betrayal of God's trust, and the wrongful taking of life, whether before birth or after is even more so.

Each day is a gift from God to do what is necessary to have life more abundantly: to exercise faith in God Our Father and Jesus Christ, repent, make sacred covenants with

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[6] Alma 5:33-34, *emphasis added*
[7] 3 Nephi 15:9, *emphasis added*
[8] Doctrine and Covenants 66:2, *emphasis added*
[9] 2 Nephi 11:5, *emphasis added*
[10] Ether 3:14, *emphasis added*

God through ordinances, receive the Holy Ghost, be fruitful, keep covenants building up the kingdom of God beginning in one's own home and ultimately qualify for eternal life.

The object of life is to not die, not only physically but spiritually. The object is to not die, and yet we do. Physical death spares no one and because we all make mistakes we are cut off from the presence of the Lord; we all die spiritually as well. "(But) … God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[11] Because of Heavenly Father's gift of His Son, we need not perish but have life more abundantly now and life eternally hereafter if we will only receive the gift of His Son and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

From the first moment we draw breath, we instinctively fight to keep on breathing. There is no urge stronger, more irrepressible, or more primal than the urge to breathe, to live. Instinctively we flee from a predator, we stay a safe distance from the edge of a precipice, we desperately struggle to water's surface to gasp air when submerged and we rush to the hospital when we bleed or when disease invades. We desperately fight to stay alive and struggle to be healthy.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord said, "And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost."[12] When our instincts for spiritual life and spiritual health equal our instincts to preserve physical life, when we hunger and thirst after righteousness as we do for food and water, we will be filled with life, even the Holy Ghost.

The Parable of the Little Shop of Bread and Water

> In the middle of a dark and loathsome city there is a small, rather plain shop. Most people are unaware of it and those who are, largely give it no thought. The shop is simple, but clean and inviting, but some resent the little shop. They throw rocks at its windows and ridicule those who go inside.
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> All are invited to enter, eat, and drink without price. The menu is simple, only bread and water. It isn't advertised but those who eat the bread and water never die.

[11] John 3:16
[12] 3 Nephi 12:6

> Some people don't stop to eat because they have food of their own, more exotic but not nearly as nutritious. They eat and eat and grow weaker and weaker until eventually they die. They are always eating but never satisfied.
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> Some don't stop to eat because others will shun them if they do. The little shop is not the most popular place to go. Others don't eat because they think they won't like the food. They won't even try. Some don't like how the food is served. Many don't eat because they don't know about the little shop and the unusual food it offers. Some are so accustomed to bad food they don't like the plain bread and water. They quit going and eventually die.
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> Some do eat and drink. They are healthy and happy, and they never die.

As Jacob said, "Come, my brethren, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore, do not spend money for that which is of no worth, nor your labor for that which cannot satisfy. Hearken diligently unto me, and remember the words which I have spoken; and come unto the Holy One of Israel, and feast upon that which perisheth not, neither can be corrupted, and let your soul delight in fatness."[13]

If I were assigned to live on the moon and could only take one chapter of scripture with me for my posterity, I might choose the words of Lehi in Chapter Two of Second Nephi. He described the plan of salvation and said many profound things including: "Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and **choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit**."[14]

The Lord declared to ancient Israel: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore **choose life**, that both thou and thy seed may live."[15] Choose best. Choose life.

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[13] 2 Nephi 9:50,51

[14] 2 Nephi 2:27,28, *emphasis added*

[15] Deuteronomy 30:19, *emphasis added*

The Lord God said to Ezekiel, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die … cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for **why will ye die, O house of Israel**?"[16] That is a very good question! Others have asked the same question. Jacob did: "Yea, today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; for **why will ye die?**"[17] Helaman's son Nephi echoed the same saying, "O repent ye, repent ye! **Why will ye die**?"[18] It's a good question that has no good answer. To stand forever is to live forever. Choose best. Choose life. Chose Christ.

Choose Life

What purpose is life, haunts our soul
As we yearn and wonder and want to know.
Could it be said with just one word
Yes "life" is the purpose, "life" is the word.

Life today with the beat of the heart
But the life from birth was not the start.
We lived before in a heavenly sphere
And prepared to do what we're doing here.

Life right now and life before
Life through the Spirit and life evermore.
Life with its beauty; yes, life's the story
With life eternal, alive in God's glory.

Life or death is for us to choose.
To live or die, to win or lose.
A simple choice we make each day
With each thought that comes our way.

The choice is made by the things we do,
By what we say and if we're true
To the Son of God and all He said
His words are life, our souls are fed.

He said He came that His sheep have life,
Life more abundant in a world of strife.
But because of sin whether great or small
We all die which is the worst of all.

But better yet the promise rings
Of life again, O' death where is thy sting?
Through faith in Christ and repentance too
Ordinances let the light shine through.

He suffered our sins that we be born
With life like sun in the early morn
That warms and chases the darkness away.
His Spirit, His love, and the strength to stay.

He paid the price for all our sin
That we the fight with death would win
That life, and strength and peace sublime
Be ours for now and throughout all time.

Because of Him we are not cast off
Because of Him we are never lost,
Atonement He made that we might live
With life eternal His great gift to give.

In a world of chance and uncertainty
We control the most important things.
By words and thoughts, by the things we do
We become and live, just what we choose.

Life or death is a simple choice
Choose well, so that your heart rejoice.
A simple choice we make each day
Choose Life, choose Light, choose the Way.[19]

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[16] Ezekiel 18:20,30
[17] Jacob 6:6, *emphasis added*
[18] Helman 7:17, *emphasis added*
[19] Lawrence E. Corbridge, February 1, 2019

Redemption Surpassing Redeemer

Finally, people inadvertently replace Christ with what He did. They speak (and maybe think) about the Atonement and "the power of the Atonement" as though it were an independent resource. One man said, "I am so very happy for the power of the Atonement that blessed my life through the years." It would be better to think, "I am so grateful for Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ who forgave my sins because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ and have blessed me with the spirit and power of the Holy Ghost."

The resurrected Christ said, "whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, **him will I hold guiltless before my Father** at that day when I shall stand to judge the world."[20] The One who is Christ, He will intervene, not the Atonement; He will stand between us and justice; He will offset our mistakes because of His Atonement, but He will hold us guiltless. He does that.

There is no "power of the Atonement" separate and apart from God. Christ can forgive our sins because He satisfied the demands of justice having suffered for our sins. He will qualify us to receive God's Spirit, God's power which is the power that sanctifies if we are willing. Those are the great gifts of God: the gift of His Son (which, yes, includes the Atonement, His teachings, and Resurrection) and the gift of His Spirit, and by those two gifts we may qualify for the gift of His life.

A bishop said a member who had repented of his sins had "applied the Atonement of Christ in his life." That is a very common way of thinking and talking about the Atonement, but it is wrong. Yes, we must meet the requirements for redemption, but we don't "apply the Atonement." It isn't a magical lotion. It isn't something we apply. We don't do it, Christ does. He is the Savior, not what He did. The Lord Jesus Christ can forgive our sins because He suffered for them. But He is the one who does that. Heavenly Father forgives us because of His Son.

A woman prayed, "Please bless us to be strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ." We are not strengthened by the Atonement, rather by Christ. We would better pray, "Please bless us to be strengthened by thy Son, Jesus Christ because of His Atonement." He said, "I will make weak things become strong unto them."[21] He does that, not the Atonement. Yes, He can do it because of the Atonement, but He does it. It

[20] 3 Nephi 27:16
[21] Either 12:27

may seem a fine distinction, but it is an important one. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," He said.[22] Not even the Atonement.

A man with a long history of immorality said, "The power of the atonement is real and cannot be denied. For most of my life I could give a textbook definition of the atonement but now I understand that is a force of love and redemption that can conquer addiction and sin."

I understand and sustain the joy of his redemption, but the Atonement is not "a force of love and redemption that can conquer addiction and sin." Jesus Christ is. He is the Savior, not the Atonement. It is Him. There is no other name, not even "Atonement" by which men may be saved but the name of Jesus Christ.

The man continued: "It is the greatest gift. It heals broken hearts and can rebuild trust and integrity." No, Christ heals broken hearts. He went on to talk about "activating the atonement" in his life. We don't "activate the Atonement" any more than we apply it.

President Russell M. Nelson said, "It is doctrinally incomplete to speak of the Lord's atoning sacrifice by shortcut phrases, such as "the Atonement" or "the enabling power of the Atonement" or "applying the Atonement" or "being strengthened by the Atonement." These expressions present a real risk of misdirecting faith by treating the event as if it had living existence and capabilities independent of our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ …. There is no amorphous entity called "the Atonement" upon which we may call for succor, healing, forgiveness, or power. Jesus Christ is the source."[23]

The rescue has overshadowed the Rescuer. Redemption has surpassed Redeemer. The sacrifice has become greater than the One who made it. And that's a mistake. It diminishes Christ.

Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by (Him)."[24] He is the Way, the ideal to which every human heart and mind should aspire. He is the Truth, how to achieve it. He is the Life, the power to do it and the reward when you do. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end and the course in between. He is the destination, the route, and the outcome.

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[22] Exodus 20:3
[23] Russell M. Nelson, *Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,* General Conference, April 2017
[24] John 14:6

We are nearing the end of this series. In the next episode, we will talk about the one thing that can scuttle your mission here on earth. I hope you will stay to the end and stand forever.