

Be Worthy of Celestial Exaltation

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It is a glorious experience to be part of this fireside, in the presence of so many keen, alert, youthful minds. The God-given human mind is far greater as a reservoir for organizing and accumulating knowledge than the greatest man-made computers. The human mind is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of all of God's masterful creations. As we unite our minds this evening in the atmosphere of the Lord's university, the power of your potential godliness can be felt. We have assembled this evening to think, to reflect, and to enjoy the blessings of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ said, "And the Spirit shall be given unto you by the prayer of faith; and if ye receive not the Spirit ye shall not teach" (D&C 42:14). I have prayed, with faith, for the Holy Ghost to be with us.

Know the Father and the Son

Jesus asked us to know our Heavenly Father and to know Jesus Christ. He said of this life, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent" (John 17:3). Remember those words. They were given by a living God, and they are clear and complete and do not need correction or adjustment. To have the full measure of eternal life in a divine way you must know the only true God and Jesus Christ.

I repeat, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." Knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ is the most rewarding and precious of all knowledge. If you were asked these questions: "Do you know God?" "Do you know Jesus Christ?" what would your answer be? It is important to know that the scriptures contain divine tests to determine the effectiveness of the doctrines and commandments in our lives. I repeat the questions: "Do you know the only true God, and do you know Jesus Christ?" If your answer is "yes," then let's see how you measure up to the test as given by the apostle John. He said, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3-4). And I don't mind telling you that test has been translated correctly. Be careful not to get carried away with any foolish thoughts that might justify weakness and failure to know and keep God's

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commandments. Does your knowledge of God impel you to know and keep his commandments? Knowing and keeping the commandments of God are the divine ways to perfection and eternal life in the kingdom of God.

It is dishonest and most disrespectful to say that you know God and that you know Jesus Christ and then to continue to ignore and set aside their commandments. Jesus said, "Behold, this is your work, to keep my commandments, yea, with all your might, mind, and strength" (D&C 11:20).

God is available to all that ask, seek, and knock. Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7–8). This is a God-given formula on how to reach and know your Heavenly Father and your Savior, Jesus Christ. There is no other divine way; all other programs come from man or the devil.

It is a profound truth that each of you is in the image and likeness of God. Your creation within your mother and your birth were divine miracles. Your spirit, your brain, your eyes, your ears, your heart, and every part of your glorious, magnificent soul were made possible by the only true God.

This earth, universe, the air that we breathe, the food and water that we consume, and nature with all of its splendor and beauty were made possible by the only true and living God and Jesus Christ. We owe them everything, and our first interest and desire should be to know them.

Love the Lord thy God

Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:37–38).

If you were asked the question "Do you love God first?" what would your answer be? If your answer is "yes," you should measure up to

the Lord's test. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

Again, John, the apostle of love, gave words that test us on the depth of our love for God. He said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3)

In the latter days, Jesus said, "If thou lovest me thou shalt serve me and keep all my commandments" (D&C 42:29). He also said, "And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them; And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship" (D&C 20:18–19).

Do you love God first? Do you love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind? Do you serve God? Do you know and keep God's commandments?

The Lord promised, "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" (D&C 14:7).

Do you owe the Lord for every day of your life? Some feel that they owe the Lord nothing. Yes, you owe him for your parents; for your spirit, mind, and body; for the sunshine; for the earth; for your friends and loved ones.

A young man once said to me, "I don't pay my tithing because I don't believe that I owe the Lord anything."

I answered, "What if the Lord were to turn the air off for a few moments, would you hastily change your mind?"

He responded, "I hope that he doesn't." What would you do if the air were turned off for two minutes, and God agreed to turn it back on if you would agree to love him with all your heart, might, mind and soul? Would you

quickly agree, or would you want to procrastinate and think it over?

The Lord does not force man into loving him. He promised man this choice privilege and blessing in these words: “Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love” (D&C 6:20). What a choice promise! If you keep his commandments, God will encircle you in the arms of his love!

In these latter days the Lord has admonished:

Yea, blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength.

And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time—they that are faithful and diligent before me.

Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, mind, and strength; and in the name of Jesus Christ thou shalt serve him. [D&C 59:3–5].

This is a divine order for children of God. How powerful in your life is the influence of your love for God? How effective in your daily character is your love for God? The acts of your daily life, the sweetness of your character, reveal the love you have for your creator. Man is not the author of his own creation, his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, and his eternal life; all of these acts are from God. His creations are real. Birth is real. Life is real. Mortal death is real. And the resurrection and life after death are real. The highest and most important kinds of knowledge available to each of us are the doctrines, commandments, and the eternal truths from God. Don’t ever sell them short. If you fail to visit with the Lord and his prophets in the scriptures on a daily basis, you fail in one of the great blessings.

Seek Divine Truth

A prophet said, “As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). As you think in your heart, so are you. Your acts are a product of your thinking. Do you depend on a divine source for your answers? Some seek familiar spirits. Keep your eyes open. Some follow witchcraft to find life’s answers. Some seek the answers through the stimulation of drugs. Some want to feel their godliness from drugs and stimulants rather than from the commandments of the Lord. Some seek inspiration from a bottle rather than the Bible. Some look to astrology to give life’s answers, to foretell the future, and to interpret the influence of the heavenly bodies upon their lives and destinies. Some are complacent, indifferent, and don’t care.

I am talking to the finest the Lord has on this earth. There is not a finer body of human beings anyplace in the world than right here. You happen to be part of it. Yes, it is true that “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Are you looking for the divine way of life, for divine truths? Jesus lived on the earth as a God. He taught doctrines and commandments from heaven. He exemplified the divine way. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). This scripture is easy to memorize but not easy to comprehend fully.

Some choose to make their own way and plan of life. They have their own traditions and commandments. The Lord said, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

Do you know where the door to the kingdom of God is? Jesus said, “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved” (John 10:9). The apostle Paul said, “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Ephesians 2:18). Jesus Christ is the one and only way to the kingdom of God. Man can become godlike and enter into the kingdom of God by following and keeping the commandments of

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only mortal being that has ever lived on this earth that had the power of a God. He walked on water; he stopped the wind and the storm; he raised the dead back to mortal life; he healed the blind, sick, and crippled. He multiplied a few fishes and a few loaves of bread and fed thousands. He was transfigured in the presence of Peter and John; he was first to be resurrected from the dead; he ascended before witnesses from this earth into the kingdom of God.

Do you pray to God? Do you pray as Jesus commanded? Do you keep the commandment on the proper manner of prayer? The Lord's prayer is a commandment. Jesus commanded:

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. [Matthew 6:9–13]

The test: Do you pray for the kingdom of God to grow and flourish on the earth? Do you participate in helping to build the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven? Do you pray to do the will of God? Do you thank God for all good things? Do you ask for forgiveness of your sins and weaknesses? Do you ask God to help you in the temptations of this life? Do you ask God to deliver you from evil? What is your goal in this life? Is it eternal life in the kingdom of God? Do you say to your Heavenly Father, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen"? Do you ask in the name of Jesus Christ? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Jesus gave the following promise: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will

I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13–14).

Today in this troubled world many are looking for evidence of divine power. We must all open our eyes and our hearts to the abundance of divine power in our own lives and in all that surrounds us.

Many are looking for peace; Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. Many are looking for a powerful voice; the voice of Jesus Christ is the most powerful voice known to man. Many are looking for an eternal purpose. Jesus commanded all mankind to "seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

The test: Do you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness or do you put worldly gains and achievements first?

Protect Yourself Against Evil

The apostle Paul warned and commanded the saints of his day to be strong in the Lord and the power of his might, to put on the whole armor of God:

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. [Ephesians 6:11–18]

Again in these latter days, Jesus Christ commanded that man, and especially members of his Church, put on the whole armor of God (see D&C 27:15–18).

Why do we as children of God with potential godliness need the protection of the whole armor of God? Why do we need protection against the powers of the devil and his evil, ungodly ways? Why do we need protection against traditions and commandments of men? Why do we need protection against Satan's inspired clothing styles, Satan's inspired music, and Satan's inspired traditions? Why do we need protection against Satan's inspired, sex-stimulating lyrics and eardrum-destroying music? Why? Some people like Satan's music more than they love the Lord's music. These people are among us. If you are one of them, I can tell you that much of the rock music and hard rock comes from Satan. It is part of the destruction of godliness. The devil has been given power to lead people captive at his own will. I will read it to you from the scriptures. Here is the power Satan was given by your Heavenly Father: "And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice" (Moses 4:4). The only protection we have is the voice of the Lord.

The prophet Alma said:

For I say unto you that whatsoever is good cometh from God, and whatsoever is evil cometh from the devil.

Therefore, if a man bringeth forth good works he hearkeneth unto the voice of the good shepherd, and he doth follow him; but whosoever bringeth forth evil works, the same becometh a child of the devil,

for he hearkeneth unto his voice, and doth follow him.

And whosoever doeth this must receive his wages of him; therefore, for his wages he receiveth death, as to things pertaining unto righteousness, being dead unto all good works. [Alma 5:40–42]

The prophet Mosiah recorded, "Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice [speaking for the Lord], the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day" (Mosiah 26:28). The Lord said to the Prophet Joseph Smith, "The hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion" (D&C 1:35). President Harold B. Lee, on March 18, 1973, said in the Manti Temple, "Now is the time spoken of in the scriptures when peace shall be taken from the earth. We are in it. It is all around us." Then hear these comforting words: "And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon . . . the world" (D&C 1:36). Brothers and sisters, fellow students, there has never been a better time in the history of man to be a Saint with Jesus directly at the head of the Church. Don't despair. He has more power than the adversary, far more.

We are in the last days. Prophecies from the scriptures about the last days are being fulfilled. You have heard this passage many times, but it bears a lot of repeating:

In the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. [2 Timothy 3:1–7]

Today, as never before, we need the whole armor of God. We need to keep it tight. We can't wear it loose because the devil is too clever with his darts. Righteousness today is wrestling against the rulers of darkness in this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. The fiery darts of evil and wickedness are all around us.

When the Lord said the time was nigh at hand when peace would be taken from the earth and the devil would have power over his own dominion, he gave the comforting statement that the Lord would be at the head of this Church. President Kimball is the mouthpiece for the Lord, but the Lord is the head of this Church. The Lord said, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). We should not be tempted in this life, brothers and sisters, to try to gain the celestial kingdom by shoddy, questionable, manmade shortcuts.

Progress Toward Celestial Exaltation

To the progressive mind, searching is inevitable. Reaching and wanting and waiting are also inevitable. But be sure to enjoy the full journey of life; don't always wonder when you are going to get there. Some want to arrive without taking the journey. One of the choice virtues of life is to be prepared to enjoy the journey. Some want God's rewards and blessings without earning them. Some want divine protection without putting on the whole armor of God. Remember God's greatest gift and blessing is to live someday with him in his celestial kingdom. Are you preparing and working to receive a degree that prepares you to enter into the celestial kingdom? Are you building a celestial, godlike character into your

life? Are you devoting sufficient time to preparing your mind and body for celestial glory? If you want to grow a celestial garden, you had better sow celestial seeds. The apostle Paul gave this warning:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. [Galatians 6:7–9]

The apostle said, "Be valiant and do not grow weary and faint on the course, on the journey." If you sow seeds of righteousness, you will harvest righteousness. If you sow thorns and corruption, you will reap thorns and corruption. A prophet of the Lord said, "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7). If you sow seeds of purity, you will harvest purity. If you sow seeds of petting, immorality, and promiscuity, you will harvest destruction to your godlike attributes. If you sow seeds of pure love, you will receive pure love. If you love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, you will reap God's love. If you would obtain celestial glory, you must plant into your heart and character God's heavenly ways. Jesus admonished in these words: "For if you will that I give unto you a place in the celestial world, you must prepare yourselves by doing the things which I have commanded you and required of you" (D&C 78:7). If you want a celestial life, you will have to plant celestial seeds. Pure religion comes from God. If you want pure religion in your life, you must plant the gospel of Jesus Christ in your heart. Remember, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." If you think as a celestial being, you will be a celestial being. If you think as a

child of God should think, you will be a member of his celestial family.

Jesus said, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Isn't that a great promise? Our religion teaches personal responsibility to a living, personal God. There is a powerful, divine influence in knowing that an interested, all-seeing eye scrutinizes our every thought and word and act. Salvation and godliness come from the church of Jesus Christ. His church was established to build divine character in the human soul. The Church was organized for the perfecting of the Saints. The Lord has raised up prophets, apostles, and leaders that are inspired to lead the Church. They are the mouthpieces of the Lord, the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation. With such heavenly guidance, none need go astray. You must keep in mind that there is a divine purpose in your life. Each day you are preparing for the degree of glory that you will merit from your life's work. There is a degree available that will allow you to enter into the celestial kingdom of glory; there is a degree available that will qualify you to enter into the terrestrial kingdom of glory; there is a degree available, and the requirements, that will permit you to go into the celestial kingdom of heaven with God. All of us, all mankind, will receive a final examination from God. And each will receive his graduation degree of glory, befitting his life's accomplishments in relation to how he has obeyed the will of the Lord. The Lord gave these words:

For those that live shall inherit the earth, and those that die shall rest from all their labors, and their works shall follow them; and they shall receive a crown in the mansions of my Father, which I have prepared for them. [D&C 59:2]

For they shall be judged according to their works, and every man shall receive according to his

own works, his own dominion, in the mansions which are prepared. [D&C 76:111]

We are free to choose for ourselves. Receiving the degree and diploma of salvation and eternal life for the celestial glory is the greatest of all successes and achievements. This is God's greatest gift and reward. Remember his promises:

If thou wilt do good, yea, and hold out faithful to the end, thou shalt be saved in the kingdom of God, which is the greatest of all gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation. [D&C 6:13]

They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.

Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness. [D&C 88:28–29]

The vision and revelation received by the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon pertaining to the celestial kingdom is recorded in section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, as you know. It is a divine classic, and, in my opinion, among the greatest of all literature. Be sure you are acquainted with section 76 of the word of God. It contains information on the three kingdoms that God has prepared and promised to his children. If you have prepared yourself for the celestial kingdom, you are prepared to live with God and his saints. Here are the blessings for the celestial kingdom. I am going to read them from the word of the Lord, and then I will close. The people who will inherit the celestial kingdom are those that, after being baptized and receiving the Holy Ghost,

overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God. [D&C 76:53–58]

This goal is worth working for. Don't dissipate your godliness for a dish of mush. Don't sell it for a pot of porridge.

Section 76 continues:

Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

And they shall overcome all things.

Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection.

These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. . . .

These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all [D&C 76: 59–66, 68–70]

We have a prophet today. If you ever have a problem that seems too difficult for you, go to your bishop, or go to your stake president, and if the problem still seems too difficult, write a letter to the prophet of God. He'll honor your letter. Don't despair. You are a child of God, in his image and likeness. That makes you big enough for any occasion, big enough for any problem that can come. I know that the Lord is close by. I see his hand working all the time, all over the earth. I see his prophet making prophetic moves and his apostles making inspired moves on the earth. We are not left without leadership. We are not left to despair. The greatest day of all is coming when Jesus comes with his saints to reign on this earth. Let us be sure we are with him, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.