

# Count The Cost

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“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”  
Hebrews 13:8

It is with the great joy of believing in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that I greet you with this letter at this time. May His gracious blessings continue with each one as we seek our heavenly Father’s face together in the fellowship of our risen Lord (I John 1:7). Thanks be to God for His wondrous blessings which He has shed upon us for the sake and by the grace of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

## **After All We Can Do!**

In the beginning, when Jesus Christ agreed to redeem mankind according to the will of our heavenly Father (Genesis 3:3), He knew what it would cost Him – His life – not just for a period of time, but for eternity. He had counted the cost, knowing that the price to be paid was an infinite and eternal one (cf. II Nephi 6:15,16 with I Corinthians 6:19,20). In reality, Jesus Christ was slain from the foundation of the world (Genesis 7:54 & Revelation 13:8). Why? It is so we who were lost might not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). What a marvelous gift of love! For there is no greater gift than eternal life (D&C 12:3 James 1:17).

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him,

and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen.” Romans 11:33-36

In His boundless love and the atonement He has made for our sins, our Lord has covenanted with us, choosing us as His bride (cf. Ephesians 5:25-30), and promising never to leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He is committed to be devoted to us forever. Are we of the same mind? This is a question we cannot ignore for Jesus has set forth a rather sobering challenge to all who would accept Him as their Lord and Savior:

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have money to finish his work? Lest, unhappily, after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish his work, all who behold, begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. And this he said, signifying there should not any man follow him, unless he was able to continue...” Luke 14:29-31

Have we or are we willing to count the cost of discipleship? Please do not give up heart if you feel somewhat unsure of yourself or your conviction. Why? Because the One who has begun a good work among us is willing and faithful to complete His work (Philippians 1:6), which is

our redemption and eternal life (D&C 22:23). He is our Savior and our defender; He is our strength and our Advocate:

“Listen to him who is the Advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him, saying, Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.” D&C 45:1c-e

The cross testifies to us that Jesus Christ is to be trusted; He is willing to go all the way. He did not pay such a great price to lose us or condemn us in the end (John 17:12). Even when we fail, Jesus Christ intercedes for us, encouraging us and uplifting us (cf. I John 2:1). Again, our redemption is our Lord’s work and glory (D&C 22:23b). This is what He does best. If the work of creation was counted as good to Him (ref. Genesis 1), then think of how the work of salvation must be.

On the other hand, if we refuse to repent of the sins that sent Him to the cross and refuse to work the works of His righteousness, then the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for us is ineffectual and we must perish in our sins (Alma 8:95-107). He will be satisfied. He wills that all should come to repentance (cf. II Peter 3:9). His work is effectual for us only if, with a child-like heart, we yield to His leadings to repent and work righteousness (Mosiah 1:120).

Because we cannot save ourselves, our Creator must save us by His grace, i.e. His divine favor, through the gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8-10). What is our part in all of this? To believe sufficiently to follow Jesus Christ and do the things which He has done (cf. II Nephi 13:16, John 15:12,13 & III Nephi 12:34).

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction; For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.” Proverbs 3:5-12

Nephi has proclaimed, “We know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after all we can do*” (II Nephi 11:44). Just what exactly does he mean, “after all that we can do?” Our brother Gary Whiting shares a testimony about this scripture which has greatly expanded my understanding of the amazing and precious gift of salvation by grace. Once while he was studying the words of the king of the Lamanites who had taken upon themselves the name of Anti-Nephi-Lehi, Gary said he was drawn to the phrase, “for *it was all we could do* to repent sufficiently before God” (Alma 14:33). That’s it! Repentance! To repent sufficiently, by relying solely upon the merits of Jesus Christ, is all we can do to obtain salvation by grace (cf. Alma 14:32 with II Nephi 11:44). Is not this the gospel which has been preached in all ages (cf. Matthew 4:16 with D&C 13:3)? Repent and come to Christ (D&C 3:16)?

If our eye is set single to His glory and work of redemption, we will repent and come as the Spirit has bid us to come. Those of us who do come to the Truth will be filled with light, even the light of eternal glory, and thus we will receive eternal life (cf. D&C 85:18 & D&C 50:6b,c).

Jesus Christ’s church, i.e. His body, consists of those who repent and come to Him for the re-

mission of sins (cf. Helaman 2:29-32,44,45 & III Nephi 3:10-18). It is built up when sinners repent and come to Jesus Christ to learn of His ways (D&C 3:16 & D&C 39:2 with Matthew 7:34,11:29,30). Just repenting and coming to Christ is not enough, however (II Nephi 13:27-32). They must “endure of [His] church” to the end (D&C 3:16, III Nephi 8:48). For those who do, Jesus has promised to establish them upon His Rock.

At this juncture, I feel led to make the following clarification: while priesthood and the ordinances they perform are necessary components of or functions in the body of Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16 & D&C 83:3c), they do not constitute the Church. To teach thus is to step outside the teaching of Jesus Christ which He has set forth in the scriptures (cf. D&C 3:16,17 & Mosiah 11:129,132 with Moroni 6:1-3).

“Behold, this is my doctrine: Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church; whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore, he is not of my church.” (Section 3:16a-b)

Jesus has testified repeatedly that nothing from without can prevail against His Church, not even the gates of hell (Matthew 16:19, D&C 3:17, Joel 2:32, etc.). In other words, nothing, including the gates of hell, can hold captive a sinner who desires to repent and come to Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. Nothing! All who repent and come to Jesus Christ are conquerors in Him, i.e. they are His Church. It was for this very cause that He came, died and rose again according to the will of the Father, to build up His Church (John 12:32, Luke 4:18,19 & III Nephi 12:22-30). Who can withstand the will of our God?

“...Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the

strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I Corinthians 15:54-56

No doubt there has been and will continue to be attacks against our Lord’s work of redemption until the day of the Lord when Satan is bound. Wherever souls are brought to repent and to call upon the Lord, there will be attempts to divert them from His calling and salvation. But praise be to God, Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan (I John 3:8). Christ is the victor! Is there anything which can prevail against His church? Only one, and it comes from within: the transgression of His people.

“For the Lord hath said, This is my church, and I will establish it; and nothing shall overthrow it, save it is the transgression of my people.” Mosiah 11:166

Those who transgress the commandments (e.g. Matthew 5-7) and then refuse to repent and to come back to Jesus Christ with a contrite heart cannot remain a part of His church as He views it (D&C 3:17 & Mosiah 11:129-144 with Moroni 7:49). A direct result of transgression is that the Father no longer manifests His works among those found in transgression if they persistently refuse to heed the commandments and to repent and come as a little child to the throne of grace. But worse than this, if people persist in their transgression of God’s commandments, and they refuse to repent and work righteousness, they not only forfeit God’s blessings, but they are also made ready to be “hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return” (III Nephi 12:22-24). On the other hand, if they will repent and come to Jesus Christ with a broken heart and a contrite spirit they will be saved (Psalm 34:18 & Alma 10:2).

### **The Truly Penitent**

As the work of our Savior continues among us in our own lives, homes and branches, each of

us must be very careful not to allow ourselves to stray from the pathway of faith in which the Holy Spirit is seeking to guide us into the fullness of the light of our Savior. As He continues to strengthen us and to bring others into His fold among us, we must be careful to “watch and pray always”:

“And what I say unto one, I say unto all, Watch ye therefore, and pray always, and keep my commandments, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man when he shall come clothed in the glory of his Father.” Luke 21:36

Notwithstanding this rather sobering admonition which is according to the fullness of the gospel, who can withhold their praise from our God for the wondrous work He is performing among us in these last days by drawing more souls to Himself? The Lord is doing such a marvelous work according to His victory.

The Lord still adds to His church daily such as should be saved (cf. Acts 2:47). Who are they who should be saved? Alma testified to his son that none but the truly penitent can be saved (Alma 19:106). There are four essential elements to being truly penitent according to the words of Ammon as found in Alma 14:102,103:

1. **Repent:** To be truly penitent, I must submit to a change of mind from a carnal mindset to a spiritual one, i.e. my mind must be renewed in the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 2:9-16 & Romans 12:2). One important way that I can do this is by setting my affection upon that which is above, i.e. that which is in heaven, namely our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Colossians 3:2, I John 2:15-17 & Mosiah 1:120);
2. **Exercise Faith:** To be truly penitent I must not just say “I have faith.” I must actually “exercise” my faith, and even permit the

Lord to exercise my faith, by experimenting upon His word (cf. Alma 16:151 with II Corinthians 5:7 & Alma 9:66,10:2);

3. **Bring Forth Good Works:** To be truly penitent I must bring forth “good” works, i.e. the fruit of the Spirit as opposed to dead or corruptible works of the flesh (cf. Galatians 5:13-26). Remember, “the axe is laid unto the root of the tree; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:37 & Alma 3:90).
4. **Pray Continually:** To be truly penitent I must pray continually; I must be instant in prayer, being led of the Spirit to pray (I Thessalonians 5:17, Romans 8:26,12:12, II Nephi 14:11,12 & Colossians 4:2). Remember, that it is through prayer that we receive the Spirit of truth (D&C 63:16a).

These four elements of true penitence sum up the call of the gospel to the world. What prevents many from becoming truly penitent that they might be saved? There is, indeed, a veil of darkness with which Satan has covered the whole face of the earth (D&C 36:5d). His vain temptations, as mists of darkness, distract and turn many out of the way which leads to the tree of eternal life, even though they very plainly have the Word of God before them (I Nephi 3:125). The following experience taught me something about the subtlety of our enemy and the great need for us to count the cost and to “watch and pray always” so that we might become conquerors in Christ Jesus, the Light of the world. May all who read be enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, is my prayer in Christ Jesus my Lord.

### **Pray Always...That Ye May Conquer Satan**

I was scheduled to take the final exam for my Professional Engineering license on October 30,

1992. That morning I was awakened at 4:00 with a vision. There appeared before me a spacious mansion alongside a road that I was traveling on with a companion. The first thing I noticed was that the mansion was under construction, and that there was someone who was actively building it according to a well-developed and carefully laid out plan (i.e. design).

The designer and builder of the mansion caught me gazing at the allure of his work – I thought I saw light coming from the doorway of the mansion as if it were from crystals. Then he entered into my heart. I recognized him at once as the tormentor who had grieved and pained my heart so much in the past because of my disobedience to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (cf. D&C 116:2). This brought great anxiety to me as he searched my soul for something for which he could base his claim upon me. He was especially interested in finding out if I had a love or even a longing for one of his vain contrivances or imaginings: perhaps a lust for some worldly thing or vain ambition, hopes for advancement, wealth, anything for which he could place or base a claim upon me for my soul.

But I clung tightly to my traveling companion, whom, when I looked at him, I recognized as my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My only defense against the intruder of my soul was to cry out, “I want you, Jesus! I just want you.” There was nothing else I could do. As I called out to Jesus, I saw him humbly and patiently bearing the reproach of this inspection of my heart by the enemy of my soul. As Jesus has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

Eventually, after some length of time, the intruder left me after my rather earnest and continuing pleas for mercy from Jesus. Yet I could now sense the presence of the intruder as a predator lurking about as Jesus and I continued on our journey. Our destination soon became clear to me; we were going to a humble dwell-

ing nestled in the mountains among the trees of a forest.

Once we were at this place, I felt great peace. My family was with me and we felt at home – being away from the turmoil of vain pursuits (Psalm 94:11-13). We rested there awhile. An unknown portion of time passed when a scene opened to my vision in which my wife and I had wandered some distance from our home on a forest path beside a stream. All of a sudden I became aware that a predator was near and was stalking us. We turned in earnest toward the safety of our house; but no sooner had I turned than it became clear to me that we had wandered too far away, and that we could not get back to safety on our own; there wasn’t enough time. But in the very moment of that thought, I found that we were back in the house. The guardian of our souls had swept us back into the home He had prepared for us.

Once inside, I stood at the back window looking out to where we had just been, perhaps to get a glimpse of what had been stalking us. My family was safe in the house with me and I truly felt that we were “saved by grace” because I was all too aware of the fact that we had wandered into a dangerous situation from which I could not deliver myself or anyone else. But we were delivered! Praise be to God! By His own hand He has saved us. Now, standing at the back window and looking out, I sensed the predator near...he was on the roof. And as I looked up at the eaves of the roof, there was a paw from a big cat, like a mountain lion, curled over the edge and grasping for anything.

Then I became aware that something had been placed in my hands; it looked like a sword with a curve at the end of the blade, oriented in such a way that if I struck upward it would sever the paw. This is exactly what I did. The blow made the big cat very angry and it tried to devour the whole house and all of us that were in it. But there was with us in the house a Pres-

ence that could not be devoured and we received the reassurance that we were safe while inside. Eventually we turned to go further into the main portion of the house where a doorway was opened up to us out of which shown the most beautiful light. Inside the room, which by now my family was entering ahead of me, I could see many individuals clothed in white robes. We had truly made it home. Praise God! The scene ended as I was approaching the doorway; consequently, I was unable to see more than just what I described.

During this vision, I was awake and praying earnestly. As I mentioned before, that was the day I was scheduled to take the P.E. exam to be licensed to practice engineering in the state of Kansas. Throughout the day, I came to understand that the events of the day were directly related to this vision.

This license had been part of the architecture of the house being built for me. It was an integral step towards separating me from the love of the truth by the tormentor. How? He was building me up in the pride of self-sufficiency pursued by many in this world; he was leading me to become so involved in vain pursuits that I would have little time for the work of the Lord, in building up the kingdom of heaven by crying repentance to the children of this generation. Why then was the Lord walking with me along this path? Because the Lord knew that I had to choose Him through the trial of my faith; in other words, I had to be tried and tested in order to exercise my agency (D&C 28:10,11). I thank my God for the reminder He had given me before I took the test to pray so that it would be for the welfare of my soul and not to my condemnation (II Nephi 14:11,12). Throughout the test, my Lord was faithful to His promise, for He kept me from the vain imaginings (that separates us from the truth) which had so often afflicted me during my educational life.

In response to the whole matter, I simply take

comfort in the words of the apostle Paul who said:

“...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

Upon asking the Lord for the interpretation of this vision, several things were made clear to me by His Spirit of truth. The most striking thing to me at this time is that Satan has designed and is building “mansions” for each one of us through vain imaginings and vain pursuits. He is doing this in direct opposition to the mansions that Jesus is preparing for each of us in His Father’s kingdom (John 14:1-3). In other words, Satan is trying to outdo Jesus Christ’s work of preparing for us an eternal dwelling place. Trouble is, Satan has nothing to offer us but separation from God. The allure of Satan’s web is based on a love of this world’s possessions and pleasures as opposed to a love of God alone.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are of the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all in the world that is of the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” I John 2:15-17

The things of this world are corruptible and will pass away. Only the treasures of God’s kingdom will last forever (Matthew 6:19-24). The apostle James wrote:

“...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” James 4:4

And as Jesus has said:

“...he that hateth his life in this world shall

keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be..." John 12:25,26

Satan somehow thinks he can build better mansions for the children of men in this world than Jesus can in the place He is preparing, which shall be a new heaven and earth (Luke 17:39, II Peter 3:13, Revelations 21:1-5, Ether 6:9,10 and D&C 28:6). Also, Satan apparently takes pleasure in drawing the "children of light" away from the love of the truth by attracting them to the vain mansions he is preparing for them. It seems to feed his pride if he can come up with something that can turn us away from God. In short, he is unrepentant of his rebellion against God in the beginning in which he wanted to redeem man with God's power his in own way and for his own honor (Genesis 3:1-4 & D&C 28:10).

All that Satan has to offer any of us is emptiness and despair, yet he tempts us anyway, hoping to draw us away from the reality of truth.

"And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts of the children of men, and leadeth them away into broad roads, that they may perish, and are lost; and the large and spacious building which thy father saw is vain imaginations and the pride of the children of men." I Nephi 3:125,126

When those who fall for Satan's lies and vain imaginings try to cash in on his promises, they find out there is no substance to his promises. And they are not only left empty but they come to know the anguish of a starved soul (James 4:1-4). Eventually, all who dwell in the lies of Satan will fall and be destroyed with the spacious building, Babylon which is fallen (D&C 34:3d, I Nephi 3:93-95 & Revelations 14:8). As if adding insult to injury, Satan climbs atop the heap of the fallen to try to ascend to the height of God's throne to gratify his own empty soul.

Never to obtain that to which he aspires (Isaiah 14:10-16), he persecutes and torments at his will the gullible for their foolishness in believing his empty and vile lies (Alma 9:30,31, II Nephi 6:92, II Timothy 2:26, etc.).

Because Satan is empty and miserable, he is trying to make everybody else miserable (II Nephi 1:103). It appears that he is trying to convince himself that he made the right choice in trying to ascend above the throne of God. Never to be justified, he seeks to find solace in beguiling those who claim to know the truth but who are willing to trade away the true riches of eternal life with Christ in his kingdom (which kingdom is not of this world; John 18:36) for that which cannot satisfy, i.e. vanity and pride.

It is pride which steps forward to defend and protect vanity. Pride takes many forms; it can be bold and overbearing or it can be quiet and self-assuring. But either way it is deadly. Why? Pride locks us into a house of vanity, a house which is fallen. Pride is often associated with anger and denial because it must protect the lies of vanity against the truth. Satan is the father of all lies (II Nephi 1:104) and, therefore, it is he who stirs up our hearts to anger against one another and against God – never against himself (III Nephi 5:30).

For this reason Jesus came into the world: to set the captives free from Satan's lies by calling us to repentance (Luke 4:18 & I John 3:8 with Mark 1:12,13).

"He that continueth in sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."  
I John 3:8

Repentance was defined for me during this experience as the forsaking or turning away from vain dreams and vain imaginings and turning back to the hope of the truth. Repentance com-

bats pride. It deflates it.

Faith along with repentance and the praise of a just God are the key weapons we have to wage this warfare against Satan and his vain temptations (cf. Hebrews 13:12-16). Alma tells us that:

...if ye have faith, ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.” Alma 16:143

Why should anyone hope for truth in a world cloaked in darkness? The answer is simply this: Jesus Christ came as a light from God to shine forth the truth of God so that whosoever will believe upon Him as the Truth shall be brought into the light. To those who come to Him, Jesus has promised to give to them the Comforter, i.e. the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot see and thus cannot receive (cf. John 14:16,17).

One of the ministries of the promised Comforter is to encourage “all who sit in darkness” to believe in Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). He assures all who believe in Christ of their hope for truth in this present world of darkness. This is why it is written that, “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Jesus is our hope (I Timothy 1:1). The Spirit of truth reveals this truth to those who diligently seek for truth and forsake “the pride of life” (cf. Hebrews 11:6 with D&C 94:1). The Holy Ghost comforts and guides the humble with peace in midst of their trials, i.e. as they pass through the mists of darkness to the tree of life (John 16:13,14 & I Nephi 4:38-40).

How do we receive the Spirit of truth? Through prayer (D&C 63:16). Hence, we are called to pray always that we might conquer Satan (D&C 3:1e with Alma 10:27-30). If we do not heed the call to pray always, Satan’s vain imaginings will creep into us as a subtle snake seeking to beguile and deceive its prey. Thus he seeks to fill us with false hopes and aspirations. We

must always remember that Satan is the father of all lies; as Jesus has said, there is no truth in him (II Nephi 1:104 & 6:21, John 8:44 with Genesis 3:5).

Why did God subject the children of this world to the temptations of Satan by casting him down to the earth (D&C 36:5)? Satan was not cast down to earth for us to combat him for God, but he was cast down to among us for us to learn to submit to God’s word (Genesis 3:5) and to experience the inheritance which awaits those who pursue lies and vanity in hope that they will choose the truth (Romans 8:20,21):

“And the Lord spake unto Adam, saying, Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so, when they begin to grow up sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good.” Genesis 6:57

God cast Satan to the earth to try the children of men (II Nephi 1:81-125, D&C 28:8-13 & 36:5c,d with Job 2:1-3). This life is a probationary state (Alma 9:41). In it we are to exercise our agency by answering the following question: do we love the lies of vanity and the pride of this life, or do we love the light of Truth which is shed upon us to set us free from darkness (John 8:32,36)? The choice is ours. Those who love the truth will love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ in His glory of light and truth; for them is reserved a crown of glory (II Timothy 4:8). But for those who do not love the truth, deception awaits at the door. They will eventually be deceived and drawn away from even the truth which they have known (II Thessalonians 3:7-12 with Alma 9:15-19 & Luke 8:18), and thus they will not be able to abide the day of our Lord’s coming in glory (D&C 45:10).

Our warfare is simple but not easy; it must be earnest. Pray always and put on Christ by letting Him make His abode in us (Ephesians 6:10-

18 with Romans 13:14 & Revelations 3:19-22).

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh; (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ...” II Corinthians 10:3-7

Our minds are the battleground, and so we must “let” our minds come into “the obedience of Christ” if we are to come to know the truth by which we can be set free (John 8:31-36 & Alma 16:237,238). As Paul has written:

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:5-8

If we slip up and let vanity get a hold on us and we act according to its subtle plan in building those false and deceitful dreams, we should take courage in the thought that Jesus is there to make intercession for us before the throne of God at the mercy seat (Hebrews 4:15,16).

As it is written, while it is called “Today” let us not harden our hearts (cf. Hebrews 3:7-15), but let us repent and submit to God, lest we spend eternity in the miserable state of that evil one, i.e. an habitation of lies and deceit (cf. Isaiah 59:12-21). We will not always be given the opportunity to forsake vain imaginations. The large and spacious building of pride and vanity is going to come down with all those who have made their habitation in it (D&C 34:3d & 85:32). And so the Spirit of Christ has said be

zealous, therefore, and repent, for whom the Lord loves, He chastens (Revelations 3:19). Let us, therefore, forsake the vanity and pride of this life and come and learn of the One who is meek and lowly of heart, Jesus Christ the Lord (Matthew 11:29,30).

Are we not called to take up our cross and follow Christ (Luke 14:25-34)? If we yet desire the riches of this world, can we with Paul say:

“...I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith...” Philippians 3:8,9

Our inheritance does not lie in this corruptible world which is soon to pass away, but in the new heaven and new earth which is to come (Hebrews 11:13-16 & 13:12-14). For Jesus himself is the treasure and mansion being prepared in heaven for us. As the psalmist wrote:

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” Psalm 73:25,26

This is not just a pretty way of describing one’s feelings for the Lord but is actually the way it is. As the prophet John, the apostle of the Lamb, testified:

“And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof...And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, pro-

ceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Revelations 21:22,23 & 22:1,2

To God be the glory forever. Amen.