

Fruits Meet For Repentance And Common Consent

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June 30, 1994
Revised July 8, 1994
Reformatted July 2007

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.” Romans 12:1-2

Greetings in the grace and fellowship of the Lord Jesus Christ in whom all things consist and have their being. Truly our Lord is worthy of all praise and honor and glory forever. May He pour out His Spirit more abundantly upon us as we seek the common salvation and faith which was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

It is God Which Worketh In You

During a time of preparation for recent baptisms in our congregation, I was reviewing D&C 17:7. As I studied, I was moved to ask the Lord for additional understanding regarding the commandment to repent. In this section, the church is directed to receive unto baptism those who:

“...witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins...and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins...” D&C 17:7

How exactly does someone witness they have repented of their sins? And if someone has already received of the Spirit of Christ to the remission of their sins, why do they need to be baptized? I felt that because our salvation is contingent upon “repentance from dead works” that it was important to have

a clearer understanding of the doctrine of Christ regarding these matters (Hebrews 6:1-3 with Helaman 2:72-75 & D&C 39:2b). And so I asked the Lord anew to teach me regarding His doctrine.

According to His promise (Matthew 7:12,13), the Lord was merciful and led me to a wonderful scripture which has since greatly expanded my understanding of the prevalent and profound doctrine of repentance from dead works.

The scripture I was led to is from Alma’s instruction to his son, Helaman, regarding the record of their people and the “holy writ.” In emphasizing the importance of writing their history and passing it down from one generation to the next along with scripture, Alma stated:

“Yea, these records and their words, brought them unto repentance; **that is**, they brought them to the knowledge of the Lord their God, and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer.” Alma 17:39

Here, Alma equates being brought to repentance with being “brought...to [1] the knowledge of the Lord their God, and [2] to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer” ([numbers] added). As I studied and prayed about this passage I was shown that the two parts of this declaration are parallel to the two

essential elements of repentance: 1) being turned away from sin and 2) being turned toward God.

Strong's definition for one of the Hebrew words translated as "repent" in the Old Testament includes such phrases as "to turn back (hence, away)," "to retreat; bring (again, back, home again), call [to mind], carry again (back), come again (back), consider continually, convert, deliver (again), draw back, fetch home" and "recall, recompense, recover, refresh, relieve, render (again), requite, rescue, restore, retrieve, (cause to, make to) return, reverse, reward, + say nay, send back, set again...take back (off), (cause to, make to) turn (again, self again, away, back, back again, backward, from, off), withdraw." In essence, the word "repent" consists of the action of being turned back from or returning from a separation.

Repentance is God's work in our lives. He alone can redeem us (Psalm 49:7-9); therefore, He is the One who must turn us, i.e. lead us to repent, from our sins. Stated another way, God works repentance in our souls:

"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; **for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.** (Philippians 2:12-13)

Therefore, we must not harden our hearts against His work in us if we are to be brought to full repentance. As it is written:

"Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Hebrews 4:7

Repentance is something God alone can grant us (Acts 11:18 & II Timothy 2:25). It is a gift from God to those who receive His word of truth. But as shown above, repentance is not a passive gift. As a potter molds and shapes the clay into the form he has chosen, God is intent on transforming us into the very image of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, by molding and shaping us spiritually through the trial of our faith (I Peter 1:3-9,4:12,13, Romans 5:1-5, James 1:1-4 & Revelation 3:17-20 with Genesis 1:27). As it is written, "he hath made us and not we ourselves" (Psalm 100:3 & Isaiah 64:8). Our God

created us for His glory and to show forth his praise (Isaiah 43:7,21).

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

They Began to Repent and Search the Scriptures

In Alma's expansion of the word repentance in Alma 17:39, the motivation to turn comes from two specific sources. The first is from being brought to a knowledge of the Lord our God. When the light of His glory shines upon our lives, the contrast formed between His glory and our sinful state convicts us, causing sorrow "after a godly manner" which "worketh repentance to salvation" (II Corinthians 7:8-10).

But the Lord does not leave us in a state of sorrow and despair. Alma's own conversion experience served him well in relating to Helaman, his son, the true nature of repentance (Alma 17:5-22). Prior to making the statement which is recorded in Alma 17:39, Alma recounted how an angel had confronted him as he and the sons of Mosiah were going about to destroy the church of God. The angel told him, "If thou wilt not be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God" (Alma 17:9). As it is written, "the wages of sin are death" (Romans 6:23). The words of the angel so stunned young Alma that he was brought to repentance. How? Alma reports:

"...my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree, and racked with my sins...that the very thought of coming into the presence of my God, did rack my soul with inexpressible horror." Alma 17:10,12

But Alma did not remain in a state of "inexpressible horror." His repentance was completed when he was brought "to rejoice in Jesus Christ [his] redeemer" (Alma 17:39). Here is how Alma describes his repentance, i.e. his being turned away from sin and toward Life:

"And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory

of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people, concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart, O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who art in the gall of bitterness, and art encircled about by the everlasting chains of death. And now behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed by the memory of my sins no more. And O, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain; yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy..." Alma 17:15-19

As the Lord told Adam, "they taste the bitter, that they may know to prize the good" (Genesis 6:57). Again, repentance is a gift of God who works within us to turn us away from death and unto life in Jesus Christ.

The pivotal point in Alma's repentance was when he grasped hold of the hope of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, of whom his father had prophesied. Those who are "past feeling" (Ephesians 4:17-19) and not willing to respond to Jesus Christ as the Light God sent into the world (John 3:19,20) cannot come to know the joy of their Redeemer. In their refusal to be turned from sin and be redeemed, they become as if there had been no redemption made (Mosiah 8:62-64,78 & Alma 9:29-32). Though Alma had resisted the knowledge of the Lord, now, through this act of faith while in "the gall of bitterness," he grasped hold of the hope extended to him by God.

The bitterness Alma experienced was eclipsed only by the goodness of God's mercy and redeeming love which leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). After being convicted of his sins, Alma was turned by grace, God's grace, through the revelation of hope manifest in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:20-25).

Alma's joy was so great because of repentance that he dedicated his life to bringing others unto repentance so that they too might know the Lord as he had come to know Him:

"Yea, and from that time, even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Alma 17:22

Here in Alma's confession of faith we again find parallel phrases clarifying the nature of repentance: "bring souls unto repentance" is parallel with "bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste."

Being brought to "exceeding joy" is evidence of being filled with the Holy Ghost since joy is a fruit of the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:22). As it is written, "men are that they might have joy" (II Nephi 1:115), i.e. that they might be partakers of God's love in His presence (I Nephi 2:52 & 3:63-69 with Psalm 16:11 & III Nephi 13:22).

And so Jesus Christ came preaching, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:13) by way of commandment and invitation: by way of commandment according to the justice of God and by way of invitation according to the mercy of God.

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Romans 11:22

It is through disobedience to the commandment that we suffer the severity of God's justice. However, through the invitation, "Come unto me..." (Matthew 11:29,30), we learn of the intentions of our heavenly Father toward us:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call unto me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord; and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you..." Jeremiah 29:11-14

Those who heed the call to repent and who come to know the Lord so that they might rejoice in His goodness, will enter into His rest (Matthew

11:29,30). Conversely, those who do not, will not enter into His rest (Hebrews 3:7-11).

True repentance is accompanied by a hungering and thirsting for knowledge of Jesus Christ the Redeemer. Consequently, those who are truly repentant begin to search the scriptures to learn more about Jesus Christ and His teachings and commandments. This was the response of many of Alma's people to his preaching and admonition to repent:

“And it came to pass after he had made an end of speaking unto the people, many of them did believe on his words, and ***began to repent and to search the scriptures.***” Alma 10:32

To those who hunger and thirst after righteousness has been given the promise of being filled with the Holy Ghost, by whom the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed (Matthew 5:8 & John 15:26). To realize the second aspect of repentance, of rejoicing in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer, we must act upon the prompting of the Holy Spirit to come to Jesus Christ. Otherwise, we will remain under the condemnation which rests upon the souls of the disobedient (John 3:19-21).

Be Ye Transformed

According to Strong's, the Greek word most often translated as “repent” in the New Testament means “*to think differently or afterwards, i.e. reconsider (morally, feel compunction).*” Compunction means to prick (see Acts 26:14). The word most frequently translated as “repentance” means “*(subjectively) compunction (for guilt, including reformation); by implication reversal (of [another's] decision).*” Only through the workings of the Holy Spirit in us can the decisions of the carnal mind be reversed (John 16:8 with I Corinthians 2:11-16 & Romans 8:6,7). Thus, to repent we must be renewed in our minds (Ephesians 4:23,24) through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1,2 with Titus 3:5).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but **be ye transformed by the renewing of**

your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.” Romans 12:1-2

The biggest obstacle to being transformed is what is referred to in scripture as a hard heart or stiff neck (Hebrews 3:7-15 vs. Alma 16:237). To have a hard heart means to resist the Holy Spirit when He moves to turn us away from the world and toward Jesus Christ. Those who resist the Spirit's guidance will become destitute in the knowledge of the Lord and thus perish in their sins (Alma 9:15-32):

“and he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received, for my Spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord of Hosts.” D&C 1:5g

Therefore, we have been admonished to seek the Lord and permit Him to perform His work of refining our faith which is more precious than fine gold which is corruptible (I Peter 1:3-9 with Hebrews 12:2):

“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Revelation 3:18-20,22

To heed the call to repent one must become meek, i.e. gentle or mild, toward the Holy Spirit. When someone is meek they are teachable. And thus, it is the meek who accept Jesus' invitation to come to Him and learn of the Meek and Lowly One:

“...Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden...and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart...” Matthew 11:29,30

Only by submitting our will to the Lord's will can we be turned by the Holy Spirit away from the “wicked works” of the mind and toward “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (Colossians

1:21 & Philippians 3:8 with I John 4:5,6). For those who are meek the New Covenant holds a great promise and blessing:

“And blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. And blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 5:8 (I Nephi 3:187 with Genesis 9:22,23)

Tragically, there are those who are, “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” – who is Jesus Christ (II Timothy 3:7 with John 14:6). These are they who never quite repent. They do not fully turn away from a love of this world (I John 2:15-17). By not fully repenting they try to serve two masters but will necessarily fail (Matthew 6:24). On the other hand, those who truly repent come to know their Lord personally through the testimony of Jesus Christ, the spirit of prophecy, and thus they rejoice in Him (Alma 12:3-7 & Revelations 19:10 with Romans 5:5 & 15:13).

Fruits Meet for (Worthy of) Repentance

In preparing the way before the Lord, making “his paths straight,” John the Baptist declared that we must repent and bring forth fruits meet for (worthy of) repentance (Matthew 3:35 & Luke 3:13). Other translations of these verses read that we are to bring forth fruit in keeping with or consistent with our repentance. Or as Paul stated, if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), i.e. in the newness of life.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, **even so we also should walk in newness of life.**” Romans 6:4

What are the fruits which are meet for or worthy of repentance? This question was at the heart of my desire to know more about repentance. With the understanding that repentance is coming to a knowledge of and rejoicing in the Lord our Redeemer, as shown in Alma 17:39, I was drawn to the following words written by the apostle Peter:

“And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, pa-

tience; and to patience, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. **For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” II Peter 1:5-8

“If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note the emphasis on “the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As discussed before, coming to a knowledge of the Lord is the essential element in the parallel drawn by Alma when he expounded on the word repentance in Alma 17:39. Clearly then, Peter has listed for us seven fruits meet for, or in keeping with, repentance: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and finally charity. These are to be in us as seeds and to abound in our lives as the fruit of our faith. As it is written, faith without works is dead (James 2:17).

Repentance From Dead Works

What a joy it is to know the Lord and to have gained a richer and deeper knowledge of the doctrine of repentance! We know that repentance, along with baptism, is the gate by which we enter into the fellowship of the body of our Lord (II Nephi 13:24 & D&C 39:2b with Acts 2:38 & D&C 17:18a). Yet, why has the Lord instructed the church to receive only those who, among other things, “truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of sins” (D&C 17:7d)?

Is not baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)? And is not baptism of the Holy Ghost, i.e. the Spirit of truth, for bestowing the Spirit of Jesus Christ, for He is the truth (John 14:6,15-18)?

As I pondered these and other questions, I was shown that the answer lies in the seed/fruit principle found throughout God’s creation. If we receive the engrafted word, who is Jesus Christ (James 1:21 & I Peter 1:23 with John 1:14 & Alma 18:12), as a seed and permit the knowledge of Him to grow within us, it will eventually bear fruit (Alma 16:152-173 with II Peter 1:5-8). A spiritual fruit is an outward manifestation of an inward working of the Spirit (Romans 8:26).

This is the same principle by which baptism, as a fruit, is to come about in our lives. Stated another way, baptism for the remission of sins is a fruit of an inward working of the Spirit of Christ bringing about repentance in our souls. As Mormon taught, baptism is the first fruit of repentance and baptism comes of faith (Moroni 8:29). Hence, those who come to the church to be baptized will of necessity have already “received of the Spirit of Christ” (D&C 17:7d) or else they are none of His (Romans 8:9).

We are to be led of Jesus Christ down into the waters of baptism (II Nephi 13:15,16). Otherwise we are attempting to climb up into the courts of glory without being guided in the Way God has ordained for us to be brought into His presence (John 10:1,14:6). Simply stated, if baptism is not a fruit of the Spirit of Christ it is a dead work and unprofitable to us for salvation (D&C 20 with Romans 8:14 & Moroni 8:29).

Jesus Christ, the Holy One of Israel, is the keeper of the gate, i.e. repentance and baptism, by which we enter the kingdom of heaven (II Nephi 6:80-84 & 13:24). Those who repent and come to Christ, are His church (D&C 3:16,17).

“For behold, this is my church: whosoever is baptized, shall be baptized unto repentance. (Mosiah 11:129)

According to Alma, true repentance prepares the way for us to “be born of God,” being “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Alma 17:22). By filling us with His Spirit, the Lord builds us together “for an habitation of God” (Ephesians 2:19-22), i.e. the church which is His body (Ephesians 4:11-16).

Clearly then, those who are added to Christ’s church or body are to be baptized upon their repentance (III Nephi 5:24 & Matthew 3:38 with Mosiah 11:129 & Helaman 5:116). If they are baptized, but not unto repentance, they are performing a dead work which is not of the Spirit. They may demonstrate a form of godliness, but unless they permit the Spirit to guide them into all truth they are “denying the power thereof” (II Timothy 3:5 & John 16:13,14).

“Then said the Pharisees unto him, Why will ye not receive us with our baptism, seeing we keep the whole law? But Jesus said unto them, Ye keep

not the law. If ye had kept the law, ye would have received me, for I am he who gave the law. I receive not you with your baptism, because it profiteth you nothing. For when that which is new is come, the old is ready to be put away.” Matthew 9:18-21

Why was their baptism unprofitable to them? They did not repent and come to know Jesus Christ (John 5:40-48). Jesus said that there are many who claim to be of Him. They even use His name, but it is to no avail, i.e. it is in vain, because they do not know Him (Matthew 7:32,33). Why? Because they do not love Him and keep His words, i.e. His Spirit, and thus live by the word of God (Matthew 7:35 & John 14:21-24 with D&C 83:7 & 85:17). Instead of hearing, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” they will hear Him say, “Ye never knew me; depart from me” (Matthew 25:32-47 with 7:33).

“...**be zealous therefore, and repent.**” Revelation 3:19

May everyone be brought to the Lord’s repentance that they might know Jesus Christ and rejoice in Him. For, as it is written, He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9 with II Nephi 11:95-99). And so might we, with the apostle Paul, be able to say, “I know whom I have believed” (II Timothy 1:12). If we do, we will receive eternal life. As Jesus prayed,

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” John 17:3

Hope Maketh Not Ashamed

How does the church know when someone truly repents?

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remembereth them no more. **By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins. Behold, he will confess them and forsake them.**” D&C 58:9c,d

James wrote, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed” (James 5:16). There is healing in confessing the truth about the true condition of ourselves in the

light of the redeeming love of Jesus Christ (I John 1:4-2:2). As Paul wrote, repentance is acknowledging, or coming to know, the truth (II Timothy 2:25). As guided by the Holy Spirit, we are to acknowledge the truth 1) about ourselves and 2) about Jesus Christ as our Redeemer.

Confession reveals confidence in the cleansing power of Jesus Christ (Helaman 5:116). To be partakers of God's goodness in Christ Jesus, we must come as little children, being submissive to our heavenly Father's will (III Nephi 5:39,40 with Mosiah 1:119,120). Otherwise He will not receive us unto Himself (II Nephi 6:82-84). Only through repentance does God grant the confidence to rejoice in Jesus Christ our Redeemer by the Holy Ghost, who is the Comforter (Alma 17:39 with John 14:16-26).

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Romans 5:5

We have been commanded in these last days to prepare the way before the Lord, as did John the Baptist, by repenting and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance (D&C 32:2f & 65:1a). If we do, we will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:5-8).

The Unity of the Faith

Just prior to His crucifixion, Jesus Christ prayed that those who believe on Him would become one with Him as the Father and Son are one (John 17:19-23). Thus, in accordance with the prayer of Jesus Christ, true repentance will turn us toward being unified as one body in Christ (Ephesians 4:3,13). He has told us, if we are not one, we are not His (D&C 38:6a). Therefore, the Lord works among us to bring us into everlasting unity.

Regarding the work Jesus Christ performs in the church, He has said:

“And all things shall be **done** by **common consent** in the church, **by much prayer and faith**; for all things you shall receive by faith. Amen.” D&C 25:1b

My wife, Pam, was recently proofreading some

study material which I had written on confirmation in which I had quoted this verse from Section 25. Her testimony is that as she came to the word “consent,” she paused to consider its meaning. “To consent means to agree,” she thought. She told me that the Holy Spirit then caused her to reread Matthew 18:19, which I had quoted on a previous page of the study material:

*“Again, I say unto you, that **if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, that they may not ask amiss, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.**”* (Matthew 18:19)

Upon reading this passage, Pam testified that the Spirit of Truth revealed to her that these two verses from D&C 25:1b and Matthew 18:19 state the same thing. If two people shall agree, or commonly consent, to any thing, it shall be done for them; by whom? By “my Father which is in heaven.” The important understanding is that all things shall be *done of the Father* by common consent through much prayer and faith. Only after much prayer and faith do we receive by faith all things done of the Father. As it is written, “but without faith shall not anything be shown forth except desolations upon Babylon” (D&C 34:3d).

A similar statement is made in D&C 28:2c:

*“And as it is written, **Whatsoever ye shall ask in faith, being united in prayer according to my command, ye shall receive**; and ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect, for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts...”* D&C 28:2c

When at least two of the body come together united in the prayer of faith, making their requests known unto our heavenly Father, He works among them for the benefit of the body (Philippians 4:6,7 with II Nephi 11:95-97). But they must pray in the Spirit, i.e. according to the will of God (D&C 46:8b & 63:3b), otherwise the Lord will not work among them on account of unbelief (Hebrews 11:6 & Moroni 10:18-21).

The way we come into agreement is through “much prayer and faith.” To have faith means to be in agreement with God's will (D&C 63:3b). It is cru-

cial to remember that the phrases “shall be done” in D&C 25:1b and “ye shall receive” in D&C 28:2c refer to what God does among us, not the various activities which we undertake in the church (Moroni 10:20 with Matthew 18:19). As Jesus said, “the Father that dwelleth in me, **he** doeth the works...He that believeth on me, the works that **I** do [i.e. the works of the Father] shall he do also...” (John 14:10,12 with Ether 5:20 & John 3:22).

The works we are to perform in the church are the works of the Father which He did in Jesus Christ (III Nephi 12:34 & Ether 1:105-108). These are the good works of the Father, i.e. fruits meet for, or in keeping with, repentance. They are good because our heavenly Father alone is good (Matthew 19:17).

Again, the phrase “all things shall be done” in D&C 25:1b refers to that which the Father does. The phrase “by common consent” refers to being agreed as touching one thing through faith. And “in the church” indicates where the work will be accomplished. Similarly, Moroni wrote: God works among us only after we exercise faith in Him (Ether 5:13,18,32).

If we are not one then we are not His, and His works are not manifest among us (D&C 38:6a & Moroni 10:18-20). However, lest we lose hope, let us remember that Jesus taught that even if only two are in agreement with each other according to the will of the Father, “it shall be done for them of my Father” (Matthew 18:19).

“And thus we see, that by small means, the Lord can bring about great things.” I Nephi 5:36

Common consent is not measured by voting. Rather, through common consent, i.e. agreement, the Lord brings forth an abundance of spiritual fruit from the members of His church to the glory of our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:18). It is in the bearing of much fruit, especially brotherly love, that the Lord assures us that we may know that we are His disciples (John 13:35 & 15:1-8).

The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the lives of all those who repent, i.e. those who come to a knowledge of the Lord their God and who rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer. The fruits each one bears

strengthen and build up the whole body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16 & I Corinthians 12:18-27).

The members of the body are brought into agreement if they endure in prayer and fasting unto righteousness (Acts 2:44 & 4:24-32, III Nephi 12:11 & IV Nephi 1:4 with Helaman 2:31).

“Also, I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall continue in prayer and fasting from this time forth.” D&C 85:21a

Those who seek to establish Zion must remember that we receive the Spirit of God through the prayer of faith (D&C 63:16).

“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.” I Nephi 3:187-188

May we, therefore, heed the admonition of Jude to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints of God (Jude 3) through repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ:

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference; And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” Jude 20-25

May God richly bless each one in Christ Jesus our Lord is our prayer.