

# “A Remission of My Sins”

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“...and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins.” Alma 18:9

Greetings in the name and fellowship of the Most High God. May each of us rest in His rich grace and mercy through Jesus, who is Christ the Lord, this day and forever. He is forever blessing and forever blessed.

## And This is Life Eternal

To receive knowledge about the holy purpose and nature of our God and then to be permitted to write according to His grace fills my soul with great joy and peace. And I must confess that the word of God, even “the words of eternal life” which are given to us to enjoy (Genesis 6:62), satisfies the longings of my soul and fills my heart with worship and praise for our merciful Savior. Like Nephi of old, I count the things which the Lord has placed in my heart to write to be of great worth and benefit, “especially unto my people” (II Nephi 15:3). For everything that brings us to a knowledge of our Redeemer is of great worth to us with respect to the eternal life of our souls:

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

Eternal life in His presence, where we can dwell in His light and freely partake of His love, is the greatest gift our God has to offer us (D&C 12:3b). Our Lord secured this gift for us upon the cross of His sufferings on our behalf. And

so, may each one of us grow and abound all the more in the knowledge and ways of our God is my prayer and purpose in Christ Jesus. Amen.

## Even As Many As Believe On His Name

According to Strong’s Concordance, the name *Jesus* is from the Hebrew name *Joshua*, or *Jehoshua*, which means “Jehovah-saved.” Note the past tense. He saved. This is because Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world according to the plan of salvation (cf. Revelation 13:8 with John 10:17 & 17:24). God knew beforehand the waywardness of His children and prepared for their redemption:

“And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures, from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state, and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.” Alma 13:45

If we believe upon His name, we believe in the surety of His salvation, that it was established from the beginning and cannot fail.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober...putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our

Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.” I Thessalonians 5:6-10

### **Before I Received A Remission of My Sins**

“...and never, until I did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy, did I receive a remission of my sins.” Alma 18:9

In a previous letter entitled *Fruits Meet for Repentance*, I shared some insights the Lord had graciously given to me with respect to the covenant that is consummated in the waters of baptism. These insights are based upon the Lord’s instruction to the church regarding those who should be received into the church by way of baptism in water for the remission of sins:

“And again by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism: All those who humble themselves before God and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, **and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins**, shall be received by baptism into his church.” D&C 17:7

Numerous scriptures state that we are baptized for the remission of sins (e.g. Acts 2:38 & III Nephi 14:3). Why then is it that the church is to receive those who have already “received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins?” As I shared in the previous letter, the Lord reminded me that, as taught by Mormon, baptism is a fruit of the Spirit of Christ at work within the repentant soul (Moroni 8:29 with Galatians 5:22,23). It is a sign or fruit which follows those who repent and believe the gospel according to the Lord’s commandment (cf. Mark 1:12,13 with Moroni 4:86-96).

The members of the Lord’s church are to receive gratefully all who are obedient to the heavenly call of the Lord. It is very important that none of us hinder those whom the Lord is now calling (cf. D&C 119:4) lest we suffer chastening by temptation (cf. D&C 92:1a,b):

“Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up – that which ye have seen me do. Behold ye see that I have prayed unto the Father, and ye all have witnessed; and ye see that I have commanded that none of you should go away, but rather have commanded that ye should come unto me, that ye might feel and see; **even so shall ye do unto the world; and whosoever breaketh this commandment, suffereth himself to be led into temptation.**” 3 Nephi 8:55-57

Regarding those who believe in Jesus Christ and come to Him, Jesus said:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also**; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” John 14:12

What were the works that Jesus worked? From the onset of His ministry, Jesus worked the works of the Father, saying, “For I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:31 with John 14:10).

“...My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.... The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth; and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.” John 5:17-20

Jesus Christ began His ministry by being baptized as a witness that He would keep all of His Father’s commandments (II Nephi 13:9). Upon presenting Himself to John, Jesus told John that

he should baptize Him so that they might fulfill “all righteousness” (Matthew 3:43). That baptism is a work of righteousness, then, is self-evident from our Lord’s own word.

Peter confessed, upon witnessing the work of the Lord in the life of Cornelius and his household, that those who work the works of righteousness will be accepted with the Lord:

“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him [God], **and worketh righteousness**, is accepted with him.” Acts 10:34,35

Working righteousness includes being baptized. While Peter declared the remission of sins through Jesus Christ to Cornelius and his household, they received the Holy Spirit with great joy and worship. They were then received into the body of believers through the baptism of water in agreement with the instruction given to the church in D&C 17:7 (Acts 10:43-48).

Such works or fruits of righteousness come by Jesus Christ “unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:11); as it is written, He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jeremiah 23:6). It is important, therefore, that we know just how baptism is one of these fruits of righteousness and how we are to work this work in accordance with the remission of our sins.

We receive a remission of our sins by no longer hardening our hearts against our Lord, but permitting His Spirit to dwell in us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness – to turn us away from our iniquities unto serving the living God in righteousness (cf. John 6:44, Acts 2:26, Hebrews 9:14 & Alma 16:237 with I John 1:7-9). It is equally important to understand that the remission of sins can be lost to an individual if “the good Spirit leaveth him unto himself,” e.g. when someone blasphemes against the Holy Ghost or is unforgiving when he himself has been forgiven (cf. Matthew 12:37,38 & 18:33

with Hebrews 6:4-7 & 10:24-32). Therefore, we must seek to retain the remission of sins through continuing to exercise faith in the name of Jesus Christ through obedience to His doctrine (cf. Mosiah 2:18-24 with III Nephi 5:28-43).

“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” Hebrews 10:26-27

Enos specifically writes of the “wrestle” which he had before he received a remission of his sins. He had been taught by his earthly father, Jacob, regarding eternal life and “the joy of the saints.” Once, while out hunting in the forest, his father’s words “sunk deep” into his heart (cf. Luke 9:44) and his soul “hungered.” After earnestly seeking the Lord through prayer and supplication, Enos became filled with the joy of the saints and the hope of eternal life through the power and gift of the Holy Ghost which washed away all his sins (Romans 15:13 with Titus 3:4-7, Matthew 5:8). His account is as follows:

“And I will tell you of the wrestle which I had before God, **before I received a remission of my sins**; behold I went to hunt beasts in the forest; and the words which I had often heard my father speak, concerning eternal life, and the joy of the saints, sunk deep into my heart. And my soul hungered; and I kneeled down before my Maker, and I cried unto him in mighty prayer and supplication, for mine own soul; and all the day long did I cry unto him; yea, and when the night came, I did still raise my voice high, that it reached the heavens. And there came a voice unto me saying, Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed. And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away. And I said, Lord, how is it done? And he said unto me, because of thy faith in Christ, whom

thou hast never before heard nor seen.” Enos 1:4-10

Here we are provided the essential elements of the faith which brings about the remission of sins, i.e. that sweeps away all of our guilt. The chief element of our faith is that we humble ourselves before our Maker and call upon Him, earnestly seeking His mercy and grace for the welfare of our eternal souls. All who seek to obtain a remission of their sins will experience this wrestle of faith if they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling before God (Philippians 2:12,13). As Alma explained to his sons, he did not receive a remission of his sins until he “did cry out unto the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy” (Alma 18:9). And he retained the remission of his sins by continuing to pray unto God for His mercy similar to what Jude describes regarding keeping ourselves in the Love of God through praying in the Holy Ghost (Alma 17:3,22-30 with Mosiah 2:18-23).

“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.” Jude 20,21

The remission of sins is not realized in people’s lives because they do some act or believe some particular doctrine. Sins are remitted to those who humbly and earnestly seek the Lord, as did David through the prayer of contrition and confession:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” Psalm 51:10-12

Note the emphasis David has placed here in each of these three statements of request to the Lord upon the retention of the Holy Spirit

within himself. We receive a remission of our sins through the sanctifying presence of the Lord’s Spirit within us, who washes and cleanses away sin from our hearts.

Because He is the light and the life of the world, Jesus Christ brings life and hope and peace into the receiving heart. Therefore, to receive a remission of our sins we must receive of the Spirit of Christ according to the will of the Father (I John 5:9-12).

“No man can come unto me, except he doeth the will of my Father who hath sent me. **And this is the will of him who hath sent me, that ye receive the Son;** for the Father beareth record of him; and he who receiveth the testimony, and doeth the will of him who sent me, I will raise up in the resurrection of the just.” John 6:44 (cf. I John 5:9-12)

It is upon receiving of the Spirit of Christ we receive a remission of our sins (D&C 17:7). And so we are admonished to no more resist the coming of Christ, but receive His Holy Spirit of truth and worship God:

“And now my beloved brethren, I desire that ye should remember these things, and that ye should work out your salvation with fear before God, and that ye should **no more deny the coming of Christ; that ye contend no more against the Holy Ghost, but that ye receive it, and take upon you the name of Christ; that ye humble yourselves even to the dust, and worship God** in whatsoever place ye may be in, in spirit and in truth; and that ye live in thanksgiving daily, for the many mercies and blessings which he doth bestow upon you; yea, and I also exhort you my brethren, that ye be watchful unto prayer continually, that ye may not be led away by the temptation of the devil, that he may not overpower you, that ye may not become his subjects at the last day: for behold, he rewardeth you no good thing.” Alma 16:237-238

Remission of our sins comes by the prayer of faith, which must be based on the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is received as the object of our faith, even the salvation of our souls (I Peter 1:3-9), if we will but humble ourselves before the Lord. As it is written, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). This principle of the divine is beautifully revealed in the response of King Benjamin’s people to the word of God which he delivered to them:

“And now, it came to pass that when King Benjamin had made an end of speaking the words which had been delivered unto him by the angel of the Lord, that he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and behold they had fallen to the earth, for the fear of the Lord<sup>1</sup> had come upon them; and they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying, O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ, that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified: For we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things, who shall come down among the children of men. And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which King Benjamin had spoken unto them.”  
Mosiah 2:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Herein lies the proper understanding of the fear of the Lord. Only by viewing ourselves in our own carnal state, “even less than the dust of the earth”, will we be brought to the proper perspective of ourselves in relationship to our God, and thus be brought into a proper frame of our existence and humility before Him.

As evidenced here, when the atoning blood of Christ is applied by faith to our lives we receive the remission of sins in keeping with obedience to the gospel, i.e. by repenting and being baptized so that we might be *filled* with His Spirit (D&C 39:2 with Moroni 8:29). He first gives us *a portion* of His Spirit so that our obedience to His commandments might be a fruit of His Spirit, i.e. a *good work* (Galatians 5:22-25 with Ephesians 5:9). Then we are baptized that He might *pour out* His Spirit *more abundantly* upon us (Mosiah 9:41).

King Benjamin’s people received the glad tidings of salvation gratefully and with great anticipation. Accordingly, they petitioned the Lord to apply the atonement of Christ to them long before our Lord would offer up Himself in the flesh for the sins of the world. And when they prayed as one, the Spirit of the Lord came upon them and they were filled with joy, *having a remission of their sins*. Is this our prayer today? And are we thankful, like the king of the Anti-Nephi-Lehi people (Alma 14:14:30-39), that God has made known the plan of salvation to us that we might know the Way, Jesus Christ, by whom we might have remission of our sins?

“Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” Psalm 107:8-9

### **Always Retain A Remission of Your Sins**

Once we have received the remission of our sins, we retain that remission by remaining humble before God, always remembering our nothingness and His greatness, recognizing that it is He who saves us by His grace and mercy and not we ourselves (Mosiah 2:19-22 with Alma 2:20).

“And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of

the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness, and have tasted of his love, and have received a remission of your sins, which causeth such exceeding great joy in your souls, even so I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long suffering towards you unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel; and behold, I say unto you, that if ye do this, ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true.”  
Mosiah 2:18-23

We must remain steadfast in the faith, having a determination to serve Jesus Christ as the Lord to the end of our lives, to be saved in the kingdom of heaven (Mark 13:13 with D&C 17:7). Those who humble themselves “under the mighty hand of God” will be kept by the Lord, for He knows how to deliver the godly, i.e. the righteous who work righteousness, out of temptation (II Peter 2:7-9 with I John 3:7).

“The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.” Psalm 34:18

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” I Peter 5:6-7

The remission of sins is granted to those who believe on the name of Jesus Christ.

“There is no other name given, whereby salvation cometh, therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that

have entered into the covenant with God, that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this, shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ. And now, it shall come to pass that whosoever shall not take upon them the name of Christ, must be called by some other name; therefore, he findeth himself on the left hand of God. And I would that ye should remember also, that this is the name that I said I should give unto you, that never should be blotted out, except it be through transgression; therefore, take heed that ye do not transgress, that the name be not blotted out of your hearts. I say unto you, ***I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts***, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you: for, how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?” Mosiah 3:11-17

How can we remember to retain the name of Jesus Christ such that it is “written always in our hearts?” One very special way is by partaking of the sacrament of the Lord’s supper together according to the ordinance of the Lord (Mark 14:20-25). Consider, for example, the prayer offered up unto our heavenly Father for the blessing on the bread:

“O God, the eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God the eternal Father, ***that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him***, and keep his commandments which he has given them, that they may always have his Spirit to be with

them. Amen.” Moroni 4:4

Clearly, the partaking of the sacrament together often is an essential means provided by the Lord for the members of His body to retain the name of Christ always in their hearts through remembrance and thus retain a remission of their sins.

“And if ye do always remember me, ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.” II Nephi 8:36

On a final note, as I was writing this section the thought came to me, Was Enos baptized? The record he provided does not say. Yet he stated that it was the words of his father, Jacob, which had moved him to call upon the Lord. While I cannot say for sure, I believe that he must have been baptized since his father plainly taught that everyone must repent and be baptized, having complete faith in Jesus Christ, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of heaven (II Nephi 6:48,49). Nonetheless, Enos’ testimony is a great source of encouragement to all who hunger for the remission of their sins. And as many as do come down in the depths of humility and receive the engrafted Word, the incorruptible seed, Jesus Christ, will find salvation to their souls through the remission of sins according to the atonement He has made (cf. James 2:21 & I Peter 1:23).

### **Faith Without Works is Dead**

At the core of the Christian faith is the confession that we receive a remission of our sins through the atonement made by the Lamb of God. This precious gift is granted to all those who exercise faith upon their Redeemer and follow Him by the Spirit of truth, according to His invitation, into all truth (cf. John 16:13,14).

Those who truly believe upon the Lord will do the same works that He did (John 14:12 with II Nephi 13:6-16). As the apostle James wrote, faith without works is dead (James 2:17,25). In other words, “the faith of the gospel” (Philippi-

ans 1:27) works – it brings about an abundance of fruit (Luke 8:8,15 with Matthew 13:21). On the other hand, works not of the Spirit of Christ, are dead works, not having Life in them, i.e. not having Jesus Christ in them (Colossians 3:4 with John 14:6). In other words, works which precede faith are dead works, “for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23 with John 15:1-17 & I John 5:12).

Jesus Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9) – not to those who run before Him and seek to establish their own righteousness.

“And he who obeyeth the **truth**, the works which he doeth they are of God.” John 3:22

Works not in accordance with obedience to Christ as the truth (cf. John 14:6) are not of faith and thus are dead and ineffectual. We must look to Jesus Christ as the author and finisher of our faith and our salvation (Hebrews 12:2). As it is written:

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that [faith] not of yourselves; but it [faith] is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:8-10

While we are not saved by the works of the law, which Paul continuously warned the church against (e.g. Galatians 2:16), God has ordained that we should “walk in” or “maintain” “**good works**,” i.e. that we should walk in the Spirit of Christ (cf. Galatians 5:22-25 with Titus 3:1,8,14). Faith does not come of signs, i.e. works or fruits (cf. D&C 63:3). It is a gift of God which is given through the grace of Jesus Christ, a gift that bears fruit (Moroni 10:9-12).

Even though dead works may appear to take on “a form of godliness,” they do not bring salva-

tion to our souls because they simply do not have the power of godliness residing in them. Such is the case with baptism. It must come of faith, being a fruit of the Spirit of truth (Moroni 8:29). That is, it must be an “evidence of things not seen,” (Hebrews 11:1 with John 14:16). And if it is, through its performance the Lord will strengthen the faith of those who are obedient to the Truth, making their faith alive, having works (Alma 16:152-159).

“Now I would have you remember also, that there were none who were brought unto repentance, who were not baptized with water...”  
III Nephi 3:68)

Baptism is for a witness before the church and before God of an individual’s willingness to humble himself before God and to keep His commandments, respectively (II Nephi 13:9,10). Through obedience to the commandments, the judgments as well as the mercy of God are established and justified (cf. Alma 16:215-230). In other words, through the witness of baptism, the children of men become accountable before God so that He might impart the greater blessings He has created them to receive (e.g. Matthew 5:13,14). Without this witness, however, there would be no commitments made on our part and, thus, there could be neither blessing nor discipline in the church (cf. D&C 81:3b). Therefore, the call of the gospel is to witness before the Father of our true intent, acting no hypocrisy before Him, otherwise He will not receive us unto Himself (cf. II Nephi 6:80-84). Only by following in Jesus’ footsteps (I Peter 2:21), in the example that He has set for us, can we hope to please God through faith (II Nephi 13:1-17 & Hebrews 11:6).

As Jesus Christ testified to John, baptism is necessary for the fulfilling of all righteousness (Matthew 3:43 with Mark 16:15). It validates and verifies the work of Jesus Christ in us, and in particular, the bringing about of a remission of our sins. Baptism is for binding on earth that

which is to be bound in heaven, even the remission of our sins according to promise of the gospel (Matthew 18:18,19). It brings agreement between heaven and earth according to the will of God as Jesus taught us to pray:

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.” Matthew 6:11

The baptism and ordination of Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery serve to illustrate this truth. The angel John the Baptist was sent to them to ordain them to the Aaronic Priesthood. Through this ordination they received the power and authority to ordain and baptize according to the priest’s office and calling. This they did, beginning with each other.

Why was it necessary for them to ordain each other if they had been ordained under the hand of the angel? It was so the will of God might be made manifest. Remember, faith without works is dead (James 2:17,25). The angel had brought to Joseph and Oliver the knowledge of the will of God and the power to carry it out (cf. Moroni 7:30-34 & Genesis 5:44). By so ordaining and baptizing each other they fulfilled the will of God and, thus, consummated the authority that had been given to them. In the act of their performance (i.e. obedience), they fulfilled the will of God for them; therefore, the will of heaven was realized or manifested (given form) upon the earth through obedience – *Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven*. Like Paul, they were not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19 with 9:17,18). They were thus in agreement with the will of God to the fulfilling of the righteousness of God, just as Jesus and John had done in the waters of baptism (cf. John 5:19). Their baptism and ordination were bona fide acts of faith. Again, as it is written:

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1



First comes the assurance of the Comforter. Then comes the fruits or evidences of things not seen, i.e. the workings of the Holy Spirit from within.

Faith, being both a gift and a fruit of the Spirit, is given by the power and assurance of the Comforter, often imparted through angels who speak by the power of the Holy Ghost unto fulfilling the covenants of God (II Nephi 14:3 with Moroni 7:30-34; cf. Moroni 7:32,33 & Daniel 9:21-23). And if faith is to survive (or reside) in us it must bear fruit; otherwise it is counted as dead, being *alone* (cf. James 2:17-25 with Alma 16:151-171).

“Behold, do men light a candle and put it under a bushel? Nay, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house.

**Therefore, let your light so shine before this world, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”**

Matthew 5:17,18

Good works come by the power of God, for He alone is good (Matthew 19:17). Our faith must work and all our works must come of faith (cf. Romans 14:23). This is because the righteousness which is of faith (Philippians 3:8,9) is realized in performing (i.e. obeying) the will of God (I John 5:1-5). This one thing, then, we must do – obey God. And only by carrying out the instruction we have been given from above – not as we choose, but as God has directed – can we hope to have peace with God.

“...Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” Jeremiah 7:23

Baptism is to the fulfilling of the commandment which has been declared from the fall of Adam (Genesis 6:49-65). Everyone must repent, become as a little child, and be baptized to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

“And again I say unto you, Ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you, that this is my doctrine; and whoso buildeth upon this, buildeth upon my rock; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.” III Nephi 5:39,40

What if someone has been baptized without becoming humble as a little child? According to the doctrine of Christ (III Nephi 5:32), they must still become submissive as a child through the obedience of faith and perform the works which He requires of them.

“For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been, from the fall of Adam, and will be, for ever and ever; but if he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man, and becometh a saint, through the atonement of Christ, the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”

Mosiah 1:119-120

Therefore, for the remission of sins to be effectual in our hearts, we must follow through with the commandments of the Lord, i.e. submit to the will of the Father, and thus bear the fruit of our faith. If someone knows to be baptized, they must do so or they are sinning against God (James 4:17 & Hebrews 10:26). Those who refuse to bear the fruit of Christ’s labor in their lives are not merely defiant and contemptuous of a just God, they are also acting ungratefully towards His Son who gave Himself for the remission of their sins. Refusal to heed the call to be baptized is a sign of a hard heart. And those who continue to resist the call to repent and be baptized will eventually become past feeling until that they can no longer hear the still, small voice of the Good Shepherd; and, thus, they belong to another fold (Ephesians 4:17-19 with

Mosiah 3:16-19).

Equally so, to be baptized as a work of the law and not of faith is to snub God. It ignores the sufferings of Christ. It is an attempt to establish one's own righteousness. Hence, it is dead and remains so except for the mercy of Christ Jesus towards those who humble themselves as little children, becoming meek and submissive to His will (III Nephi 5:39,40 with Mosiah 1:120).

To summarize, the remission of our sins comes of faith. First, it is worked within us by the reception and cleansing of the Spirit of Christ, and then it is retained of us through "the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:11).

Baptism is a "good work" which brings glory and honor to our heavenly Father (John 15:1-8). Hence, only those who "manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church" (D&C 17:7d).

### The Work Of Faith With Power

"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power..."  
II Thessalonians 1:11

The work of God which we are to perform is to believe on (meaning "rely upon") Jesus Christ (John 6:28,29). As the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus confirms our belief in Him through the operation of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 1:4-9). Simply stated, faith is confirmed belief. Therefore, those who believe in Him will work the works of God with power not of themselves (John 14:10,12).

"...Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called to day." D&C 64:5b

Paul cites for our example "father" Abraham of whom it is written, "**Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness**" (Romans 4:3). Because he believed God, Abraham was faithful to the commands of God. In other words, he acted according to God's direction through works (James 2:20). As the apostle Paul so sternly emphasized, it was not the works that Abraham performed which were accounted unto him for righteousness. But rather, it was the faith he exercised in carrying out the command of the Lord which was accounted to him as righteousness and brought justification before God (cf. Romans 4:5,5:1). In other words, Abraham did not lose focus. He did not sift his devotions from God to the works God performed. He acted out of confidence in God. Therefore, without works his faith would have been dead because he could not have fulfilled or completed the commandments of God. Abraham received the promise of the covenant through "the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13).

In the specific case of the command to be circumcised, Paul writes that righteousness was reckoned to Abraham prior to being circumcised or performing circumcision:

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without the law of works, saying, Blessed are they through faith whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham, for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? **when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.**" Romans 4:6-10

To relate this discussion back to the message that a remission of sins is to precede baptism,

consider what Paul has to say about baptism and circumcision in his letter to the Colossian church:

“And ye are complete in him [Jesus Christ], which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also *ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism*, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Colossians 2:10-12

Here Paul associates baptism and circumcision, linking them as serving similar functions in the covenants they each represent. From this comparison we learn that in the same fashion as Abraham was counted righteous, i.e. through faith, those who are baptized will be counted righteous if they do so in faith, first obtaining a remission of their sins by receiving a portion of the Spirit of Truth (by hearing the Word preached; Romans 10:16). As it was with Abraham, the “blessedness” came before Abraham was circumcised. So it is with those who receive a remission of their sins through faith prior to being baptized.<sup>2</sup> Such are they “to whom the Lord will not impute sin” because of their faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. And so again we see that those who “truly manifest by their works **that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins**” are to be received into the body of Christ.

Everyone who is obedient to the word of the Lord will experience the cleansing power of the blood of Christ by observing to perform the “works” which come by faith as evidence of the

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<sup>2</sup> In this we can also see how those who are baptized by faith, in obedience to the commandment of the Father, are the offspring of Abraham because of their faith (Romans 4:11-25).

indwelling presence of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:9). To not obey is to deny the power of godliness given by Jesus Christ through whom the gift and power of the Holy Ghost comes (cf. II Timothy 3:5 with John 1:12).

From Alma’s words at the waters of Mormon we learn that baptism is for a witness that we have entered into a covenant (Alma 9:39-41). Baptism itself is not the actual covenant; rather it is the “instrument,” if you will, of the covenant. It is a token, i.e. an outward sign, witness, or testimony (III Nephi 3:69) of the covenant we enter into by receiving the invitation of Jesus Christ to come to Him and receive His rest (Mosiah 9:41 with Matthew 11:29,30). Again, as it is written, “signs follow those which believe” (Ether 1:115). In its proper order, baptism is the first sign or work of repentance which comes forth from the life yielded to Jesus Christ, i.e. those who follow Him and do the things which He has done (II Nephi 13:15 with Moroni 8:29).

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Romans 8:14

### **I Will Give Away All My Sins To Know Thee**

Like King Lamoni’s father, to receive the remission of our sins we must be willing to give up our kingdom for the kingdom of God:

“Yea, what shall I do that I may be born of God, having this wicked spirit rooted out of my breast, and receive his Spirit, that I may be filled with joy, that I may not be cast off at the last day? Behold, said he, ***I will give up all that I possess; yea, I will forsake my kingdom, that I may receive this great joy.*** But Aaron said unto him, If thou desirest this thing, if thou wilt bow down before God, yea, if thou wilt repent of all thy sins, and will bow down before God, and call on his name in faith, believing that ye shall receive, then shalt thou receive the hope which thou desirest.

And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried mightily, saying, O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God, wilt thou make thyself known unto me, **and I will give away all my sins to know thee**, and that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day. And now when the king had said these words, he was struck as if he were dead.” Alma 13:49-54

Note here how King Lamoni’s father said, “I will give away all my sins to know thee.” Here is true repentance in operation. He was willing to forsake all, leaving behind his whole kingdom to receive the kingdom of heaven through the Holy Spirit:

“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Romans 14:17

What reason did the king give? That he might come to know God. Here again we find the key element of repentance: *to be brought to the knowledge of the Lord our God and to rejoice in Jesus Christ our Redeemer* (Alma 17:39). Only those having this same determination are to be received into the body of Christ through baptism. In short, they must be willing to give up all for the sake of inheriting the heavenly kingdom of our God.

“And they who heard, said unto him, Who then can be saved? And he said unto them, It is impossible for them who trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God; but he who forsaketh the things which are of this world, it is possible with God, that he should enter in. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you. There is no man who has left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who

shall not receive manifold more in this present time; and in the world to come, life everlasting.” Luke 18:26-30

This is the call of the gospel, to forsake all for the Lord’s sake and to confess with the Psalmist:

“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

The Lord is our portion, our treasure in heaven. Those who forsake the love of this world for His sake will inherit the eternal kingdom (Matthew 6:19,20). Those who do not will perish with the world:

“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

Like King Lamoni’s father, we must be willing to give up our worldly kingdoms for His heavenly kingdom. Otherwise, at the time of His appearing we must return to our “own place” (see Jacob 4:8).

We cannot hang onto two kingdoms (Matthew 6:24). If we try to be in between we will be rejected by Him because the love of God can not dwell in us if we love the things of the world (Revelation 3:15,16, James 4:4 with I John 2:15-17). But if we love God, we will cast our sins away from us so that we might receive His love:

**“And now my brethren, I wish from the**

**inmost part of my heart, yea, with great anxiety, even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance;** but that ye would humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear, and thus be led by the Holy Spirit, becoming humble, meek, submissive, patient, full of love and all long suffering; having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts, that ye may be lifted up at the last day, and enter into his rest; and may the Lord grant unto you repentance, that ye may not bring down his wrath upon you, that ye may not be bound down by the chains of hell, that ye may not suffer the second death.” Alma 10:27-30

To come to Christ we must forsake all our sins and embrace the Light and the Truth. And then we must endure to the end and finish our course as did the apostle Paul, to receive a crown in the kingdom of heaven (James 1:12 & I Peter 5:4):

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” II Timothy 4:7-8

### **Repent, And I Will Receive You**

At the beginning of this letter and in the previous letter, entitled *Fruits Meet For Repentance*, I began by exploring the Lord’s instruction regarding who is to be received into fellowship by way of baptism. Those to be received will:

“...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

The bulk of this letter has been devoted to the latter portion of this instruction regarding the remission of sins. But how does the church know when someone has truly repented? The Lord has provided the answer:

“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

Repentance is evidenced by the confession and forsaking of one’s sins with thanksgiving and praise (cf. Matthew 3:32 & Helaman 5:116). And so may those who have just received a remission of their sins, being released from the chains of bondage which have bound them, like the lame man whom Peter gave greater things than silver or gold, rise up “walking [in the Spirit] and leaping and praising God,” graciously acknowledging the One who freed them (cf. Acts 3:1-8).

The Lord has instructed the church to repent and confess our sins “unto the brethren, and before the Lord”:

“Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness; even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto thee to rest from thy labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days, and at all times; but remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations, and thy sacraments, unto the Most High, **confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and be-**

**fore the Lord.”** D&C 59:2e-h

For us to openly confess our shortcomings (Romans 3:23), we must be converted and changed from our carnal and fallen state into a state of righteousness, i.e. we must be born of God as was Alma (Mosiah 11:187,188). We must no longer be conformed to the will of the flesh and of the devil (who is carnal, sensual and devilish), but do the will of the Father (II Nephi 7:41).

While not everyone’s conversion experience will be as dramatic as was Alma’s, discussed in the previous letter, his experience does serve to illustrate some important elements of repentance. First, upon being confronted by the angel of the Lord, Alma became dumb such that he could not speak, and so weak that he had to be “carried helpless” to his father, also named Alma, who was the high priest over the church (Mosiah 11:177-180). People may not always be struck dumb in the repentance process as was Alma. Yet, to become speechless in terms of making excuses for our actions is in keeping with true repentance. To refute, or to attempt to change the facts about our sin, or to discount the significance of our sin when God reveals the truth to us is to refuse to be turned, i.e. to be brought to repentance. The truly repentant soul turns from his sin to the acknowledging of the truth about his circumstance, heeding the call to, “Be still, and know that I am God...” (Psalm 46:10).

When Alma, the father of Alma, saw his son in this broken state of being dumb and too weak to stand after being confronted by the angel of the Lord, he rejoiced because he knew that the power of God had overtaken his son. He caused a great crowd to gather so that they might witness what the Lord had done for his son and those who had been with him. Alma, the father, also gathered the priests of the church, who fasted and prayed that the Lord would again open the mouth of Alma, the son, and give him

strength to stand so that all could see the goodness and glory of God (Mosiah 11:182-184). According to their faith, after two days and nights Alma regained his strength and spoke encouragement to all:

“For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold, I am born of the Spirit.” Mosiah 11:186

Alma had relented and received the Spirit of Christ. He went on to confess that according to the word of the Lord, all people must be born of the Spirit, being changed from their carnal and fallen state to a state of righteousness, or they must be cast off from the presence of God forever (Mosiah 11:187-189). But Alma did not simply confess the word of God. He went on to confess the truth about his rebellion against God:

“I rejected my Redeemer, and denied that which had been spoken of by our fathers.” Mosiah 11:194

As guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:13), those who have been granted repentance will acknowledge the truth both about themselves and also about Jesus Christ as their Redeemer (II Timothy 2:25). This Alma did according to the repentance that God had granted unto him (Mosiah 11:186,190-193).

The confession of the truth is a fruit of repentance; without this confession, repentance is dead, not having works, “being alone” (James 2:17,25). 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 acknowledging and 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). Alma had found this light and was not ashamed to tell of the glory and grace of God which had redeemed his soul. He had been born anew. He came to know the Truth and was converted by

it. And so he confessed the Truth. As it is written,

“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

Hope comes from the visitation of the Holy Ghost (Moroni 8:29 & Romans 15:13). Only those who receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will not be ashamed to confess the truth and forsake their sins. All others will be hindered by pride. Only by receiving the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Meek and Lowly One, can we stand for the truth and confess His redeeming love (cf. Alma 3:8-26).

To take God’s correction or chastening (Hebrews 12:5-11) lightly or pass it off as a small matter is to cancel out our opportunity to repent and to know the Truth. As it has been said, to escape God’s discipline is to abort the life process necessary to bring us to maturity in Christ. Therefore, for me to be brought to repentance, I must become silent to any excuse and let God’s word stand as the truth. Again, repentance is to the acknowledging of the truth (II Timothy 2:25). If we so repent, we will be received by the Lord:

“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; yea, come unto me and bring forth works of righteousness, and ye shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire; for behold, the time is at hand that whosoever bringeth forth not good fruit, or whosoever doeth not the works of righteousness, the same have cause to wail and mourn. O ye workers of iniquity; ye that are puffed up in the vain things of the world; ye that have professed to

have known the ways of righteousness; nevertheless have gone astray, as sheep having no shepherd, notwithstanding a shepherd hath called after you, and art still calling after you, but ye will not hearken unto his voice. Behold, I say unto you, that the good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you, which is the name of Christ; and if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the good shepherd, to the name by which ye are called, behold, ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd. And now if ye are not the sheep of the good shepherd, of what fold are ye?” Alma 3:57-64

To repent we must hear the call of the Good Shepherd and follow Him where He leads. If we do, He will receive us into fellowship. To follow our Lord, we must forsake our own wisdom and riches and receive the riches of heaven by coming down into the depths of humility before God. Unless we do this our Lord will not receive us unto Himself (II Nephi 6:80-84).

Nephi stated that “...it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (II Nephi 11:44). What did he mean “**after** all we can do?” Jacob, Nephi’s younger brother, provided the necessary clarification when he said:

“And remember **after** ye are reconciled unto God, that it is only in and through the grace of God that ye are saved.” II Nephi 7:42

“After all we can do” refers to being reconciled to the will of God. In other words, salvation is contingent upon being reconciled to God’s will. How are we reconciled to God? Paul stated it this way:

“...yea, though we once lived after the flesh, yet since we have known Christ, now henceforth live we no more after the flesh. Therefore if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new, And receiveth all

the things of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; **To wit, that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them**; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." II Corinthians 5:16-21

Therefore, to be reconciled to God through Christ we must "live...no more after the flesh" but after the Spirit, else we will reap of the flesh corruption (Galatians 6:7,8).

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, reconcile yourselves to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil and the flesh." II Nephi 7:41

If we are reconciled, we no longer live according to the dictates of the flesh. Rather, we live by the Spirit (Romans 8:5-14). To be reconciled, we must be born of God, receiving the engrafted Word, Jesus Christ, by whom we cry, Abba Father (Galatians 4:6). "This is the will of God that we receive the Son" (John 6:44). This was Alma's experience:

"For, said he, I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold, I am born of the Spirit. And the Lord said unto me, Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men, and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God." Mosiah 11:186-188

When we repent of our sins and receive the

Spirit of Christ, we are reconciled to God by being born again through Christ such that we no longer live after the flesh (cf. John 6:44 with Romans 8:1-14). By submitting to God's will for us in Christ Jesus, we are converted, i.e. changed into a new creature by "putting off" the old creature and by putting on the armor of light, even Jesus Christ (Mosiah 1:120 with Romans 6:1-14 & 13:12,14). To do this we must follow Christ into the narrow gate of repentance and baptism, and walk by His Spirit in the straight path which leads to life, continuing therein unto the end of this probationary state (II Nephi 7:41, 13:24 & 15:10).

How we respond to God's chastening when He confronts us in our sins will determine whether or not true and everlasting repentance will take place in our lives (Hebrews 12:5-11). When Alma was chastened, he became weak, too weak to stand. By extension, should we then attempt to stand under our own strength? Those who rely upon themselves can only hinder God's transforming grace within their souls.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law [self-justification], then Christ is dead in vain." Galatians 2:21

According to D&C 58:9d quoted earlier, repentance involves confessing and forsaking our sins. In our lives each of us are constantly forsaking one thing for another according to our desires. If we love the Truth which God revealed in Christ Jesus, we will forsake the sins which separate us from Him. Otherwise, we will remain in our sins, forsaking instead God's love for us. And thus we remain as if no redemption had been made (Mosiah 8:61 & Alma 9:32).

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one who doeth evil hateth the light,



neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he who loveth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest.” John 3:19-21

Only those who have been transformed and converted through the glory of God will confess the truth because it reveals things as they really are. Confession reveals confidence in the cleansing power of Jesus Christ (Helaman 5:116). The confidence to do this comes from the assurance of the Comforter through our hope in Christ. This God-given assurance of our hope is the first element of faith (Hebrews 11:1).

To be partakers of God’s goodness in Christ Jesus, we must come to Him 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). Here then is our faith, that God grants repentance and the confidence to rejoice in Jesus Christ our Redeemer by the Holy Ghost to all who will receive Him unto the remission of their sins (Alma 17:39 with John 14:16-26).

We have been commanded in these last days to prepare the way before the Lord, even as in the days of John the Baptist, by repenting and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance (D&C 32:2f).

“Hearken, and lo, a voice as of one sent down from on high, who is mighty and powerful, whose going forth is unto the ends of the earth; year, whose voice is unto men, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” D&C 65:1a

Oh, then, may we hearken with diligence to the call of the Lord, for all who do not bring forth good works meet for repentance will be cut down and cast into the fire to be burned (Matthew 3:37 & Alma 3:90-96).

If we will accept the invitation of the Good Shepherd and repent of our sins, we will be received by God and will have His church established among us (III Nephi 10:1). If we do not willfully disregard His voice, we will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; and thus we will be granted eternal life (II Peter 1:5-8 with John 17:3). Oh, may the Lord grant again according to His word that there would be those who would come forth to be baptized, repenting and confessing their sins (Helaman 5:116).