**DC 19                                                 Historical Background**

**B. H. Roberts**

No words of the Prophet introduce this revelation in his History. Nothing is known of the circumstances which called it forth. And yet there are few revelations that have been given in the present dispensation of the Gospel more important than this one. The doctrine of the atonement of the Lord Jesus as directly applying to the individual, and God's exposition of “Eternal Punishment,” as here set forth, give it a place of first importance in the doctrinal development of the Church.(*History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* 1:72, footnote)

**DC 19                                                 Introduction**

Section 19 is a remarkable doctrinal document. Nowhere else in scripture do we get a firsthand account of the Lord describing his atoning sacrifice. Nowhere else does he count the cost, reveal the personal price that was paid, the reason for the ransom, and the consequences of failing to repent.

There is much to learn from the historical situation as well. Although the particulars are lacking, it is apparent that Martin Harris has been bothered by his own weaknesses and sins. Here is a man who has been chosen by the Lord to act as one of the Three Witnesses, who has seen the angel Moroni, the plates and the sword of Laban, but who has also stumbled on a personal level. What message does the Lord have for his chosen ones who need to repent? Section 19 is just that—a deep doctrinal masterpiece given to “you that are chosen” (v. 8), colored by the Lord’s personal and merciful invitation to repent.

**DC 19:3 the last great day of judgment**

**Dallin H. Oaks**

First, I speak of the final judgment. This is that future occasion in which all of us will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged according to our works (see 1 Ne. 15:33; 3 Ne. 27:15; Morm. 3:20; D&C 19:3). Some Christians look on this as the time when individuals are assigned to heaven or hell. With the increased understanding we have received from the Restoration, Latter-day Saints understand the final judgment as the time when all mankind will receive their personal dominions in the mansions prepared for them in the various kingdoms of glory (see D&C 76:111; John 14:2; 1 Cor. 15:40–44). (“ ‘Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 7)

**DC 19:5 those who are found on my left hand**

After the Millenium is over, there will be a little season in which Satan is released (DC 43:31). After the little season, the Lord will come to gather his sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left (Matt. 25:31-46). Then will be the final judgment in which those sheep will receive one of three degrees of glory. Many of these souls will have spent the entire Millenium and more in spirit prison, or hell. Yet, the mercies of the Lord allow them to be resurrected to a telestial glory.

But there will be the goats—those found on the left hand of the Lord. And who are the goats? They are the sons of perdition, for “he who cannot abide the law of a telestial kingdom cannot abide a telestial glory; therefore he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore he must abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory…That which…willeth to abide in sin, and altogether abideth in sin, cannot be sanctified by law, neither by mercy, justice, nor judgment. Therefore they must remain filthy still.” (DC 88:24,35)

The sons of perdition then receive their punishment, “they shall go away into everlasting punishment, which is endless punishment, which is eternal punishment, to reign with the devil and his angels in eternity, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment—And the end thereof…no man knows.” (DC 76:44-45)

**DC 19:7 wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men**

Scriptures speaking of eternal punishment often leave the reader with the impression that the sinner is doomed to an eternity of torture and misery. This is true of Book of Mormon passages as well as Biblical ones:

   Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.

   And now I say unto you, that mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment. (Mosiah 2:38-39)

   And in one year were thousands and tens of thousands of souls sent to the eternal world, that they might reap their rewards according to their works, whether they were good or whether they were bad, to reap eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to the spirit which they listed to obey, whether it be a good spirit or a bad one. (Alma 3:26)

These scriptures are designed to motivate us to repent. The idea that our punishment would continue forever is certainly thought provoking. These scriptures “work upon the hearts of the children of men” unto repentance.  They are neither inaccurate nor untruthful. Properly understood, they speak of punishment which is *eternal* and *endless* in intensity but neither *eternal* nor *endless* in time.

**DC 19:8 I will explain unto you this mystery, for it is meet unto you to know**

These passages help us to understand that those individuals who must suffer in spirit prison—and even the sons of perdition—will not suffer forever for their sins. This information constitutes one of the “mysteries of godliness” and is not intended for the wicked. Hence, the Lord commanded Martin and to those “that are chosen in this thing”, “show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me.” (v. 9, 21)

The Lord’s great mercy allows for almost all of his children to be saved from the fall of Adam. Not many, relatively speaking, will be exalted, but almost all will be saved in one of three kingdoms of glory. Therefore, we should stand all amazed that the sons of perdition are “the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath. For all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead, through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb.” (DC 76:38-39)

**DC 19:10 I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless**

**George Q. Cannon**

Contemplate the condition of the world when this Gospel was restored! What was known about heaven? What was known about hell? There are two places, one of bliss, the other place of torment. How much terror was entertained by the people at large concerning this place of torment. To have to think that this was endless; to think how the hearts of mothers were wrung with anguish at the death of their wayward children, of their loved ones, when they were told by men who assumed authority and to whom they had been taught to look with respect, that they were eternally damned—sent to a place of torment worlds without end! Is it any wonder that men wished they had never been born? They did not know what to do. Suicide brought no relief; they could not get deliverance from the inexorable consequences of living, because their souls were indestructible. They could not hope to escape from the justice of God, go where they might. And this feeling of hopelessness and misery filled thousands of bosoms, millions, I may say. But what did this Gospel do? It brought light from God, the author of our being. Instead of thinking it was a bad condition to be born, it produced a feeling of gladness in the hearts of men and women that they ever had been born; because when they saw the justice of God, that they would get rewarded according to the deeds done in the body, all fear vanished, for they would be dealt with by a just and merciful God and not a tyrant, such as the world described the Lord to be.

(Roy W. Doxey, comp., *Latter-day Prophets and the Doctrine and Covenants* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], 1: 185 - 186.)

**George A. Smith**

I have heard men spend hours in endeavoring to explain how long this hell would last. It was frequently illustrated in this manner, “Suppose a bird could carry a drop of water from this planet to another, and be gone a year on the journey, and continue this until every drop of water on the earth was carried away, and then should take a particle of sand and go to another planet and be gone a thousand years, and carry one article of sand at a time until every particle of matter of which this globe is composed was carried away, that then this eternal punishment would have just commenced, and that the torture and pain there inflicted were so great that no mortal could conceive anything about it.” The general effort in their preaching was to scare men into the road to heaven by such descriptions of eternal punishment. (Nov. 15, 1868, *Journal of Discourses,*12:334).

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

You know the idea of eternal punishment, endless punishment, had troubled the world; and because the scriptures speak of endless punishment and eternal punishment, men have stood before congregations of the people and said unto them, “If you don't repent, if you don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be damned eternally; you shall go into a lake of fire and brimstone where you will be ever burning but never consumed”; and thus they tortured the minds of the people by teaching unto them such doctrine as that. The Lord has revealed unto us what is meant by eternal punishment, for he says: “For, behold, the mystery of godliness, how great is it! For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name. Wherefore—Eternal punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God’s punishment.” (*Doctrines of Salvation,*3 vols., edited by Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956], 2: 8.)

**John A. Widstoe**

This was a new doctrine in the days of Joseph. It brought enemies to their feet. Eternal punishment, everlasting punishment, all punishment will accord with the mind and will of God. As our works have been, so our reward will be. From that there is no escape.

The implication of this doctrine is that through the ages a sinner may atone for his misdeeds. It was a startling doctrine to hurl at a world traditionated (sic) in one of the blackest errors of apostate Christianity.

The whole revelation gives much comfort to all people. (John A. Widtsoe, *Joseph Smith--Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God*[Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1951], 176.)

**DC 19:11 Eternal punishment is God’s punishment**

If the reader will excuse a brief digression, there is an interesting corollary to this scripture. The term *eternal life* has always been a curious one for me. The term implies that all we seek is to live forever, but we know that eternal life is something greater, for even the vilest of sinners will live forever. Consider what this scripture teaches us about eternal life: if eternal punishment is God’s punishment, then *eternal life* is God’s life.

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

Therefore, I say to you, eternal life is God's life; it is the life which he has, that which he possesses. Therefore, if he gives unto you that life which he has, you have eternal life, and you will not get it if you do not prove yourself worthy to enter into his presence. Now, that is the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is the great plan of salvation.” (*Doctrines of Salvation,*3 vols., edited by Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956], 2: 8.)

**DC 19:11 Endless punishment is God’s punishment**

The punishments of the Lord don’t last forever. Remarkably, they are endless yet have an end. Alma experienced the Lord’s punishment after the angel called him to repentance. He said, “My soul was racked with *eternal torment*; but I am snatched, and my soul is pained no more.” (Mosiah 27:28, italics added) The atonement of Jesus Christ snatched Alma from *eternal torment* and put him on the straight and narrow path to *eternal life*. The doctrine is a miracle of mercy from the very throne of God.

**Charles W. Penrose**

Because God is an eternal being, his laws are eternal, and there are penalties attached to all of them. But it does not follow that because a person may be banished into the eternal punishment it is intended that he shall stay there eternally. He may go into eternal punishment, he may go to the place prepared for the rebellious and the sinner and stay there but for a certain period. Some may stay longer than others. In the language of the Scriptures, some are beaten with many stripes, and others are beaten with but few stripes; but all stay until they have paid the uttermost farthing; all are punished according to the gravity of their guilt. (*Journal of Discourses,*26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 24: 91.)

**DC 19:15 repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth**

**Vaughn J. Featherstone**

Imagine the rod of the mouth of God punishing in His wrath those who commit incest or similar evils. How is it possible to comprehend the suffering through which the unrepentant will go? Their punishment will be Endless (God's) punishment. Those who have chosen not to repent will suffer until they have paid the full demands of justice. Once justice has been satisfied through their own personal suffering, then their debt will have been paid in full. But let there be no doubt—they will either repent or suffer. (*The Incomparable Christ: Our Master and Model* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1995], 20 - 21.)

**DC 19:16-17 I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent**

Do you remember how the sons of Mosiah felt about those who would suffer for their sins? “They could not bear that any human soul should perish; yea, even the very thoughts that any soul should endure endless torment did cause them to quake and tremble.” (Mosiah 28:3) With a heart full of love greater than the sons of Mosiah, imagine how the Savior must feel! He has personally paid the price. In Gethsemane, the very thought that any soul should endure endless torment did very literally cause him to quake and “tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit”. As He looks upon the expanse of mortal history, He must be pained over and over again to see his atoning sacrifice disregarded. He suffered all this so we wouldn’t have to. He is pleading with us not to waste the great power of his atonement. His message, “if you suffer, you suffer needlessly. I have paid the price. Don’t waste it. Don’t suffer as I did.”

**Russell M. Nelson**

It seems almost beyond comprehension to think that He paid this enormous price for each of us. And yet, as far as we are concerned individually, unless you and I do our part, we will not gain full benefit from the Atonement. It is that covenant relationship—that mutual trust—that makes His atonement such a personal gift. It brings us protection, perennial hope, and the promise of joy. (“Standards of the Lord’s Standard-Bearers,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1991, 7)

**Spencer J. Condie**

This wonderful plan of happiness was provided at a very high price… Every drop of divine blood was payment for a costly plan that provided us with moral agency, the ability to become righteous or to sin, and the miracle of forgiveness, which enables us to become cleansed from our sins through repentance, priesthood ordinances, and endurance to the end. (“Agency: The Gift of Choices,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1995, 19)

**DC 19:18 Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain**

“All that the human frame can tolerate of suffering was to be heaped upon His shrinking body; every misery that cruel and crushing insult can inflict was to weigh heavy on His soul; and in this torment of body and agony of soul even the high and radiant serenity of His divine spirit was to suffer a short but terrible eclipse. Pain in its acutest sting, shame in its most overwhelming brutality, all the burden of the sin and mystery of man's existence in its apostasy and fall—this was what He must now face in all its most inexplicable accumulation.” (Frederic Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 575)

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

A mortal man could not have stood it—that is, a man such as we are. I do not care what his fortitude what his power, there was no man ever born into this world that could have stood under the weight of the load that was upon the Son of God, when he was carrying my sins and yours and making it possible that we might escape from our sins. He carried that load for us if we will only accept him as our Redeemer and keep his commandments. Some of us find it so hard, so terribly hard, to do the little things that are asked of us, and yet he was willing to carry all that tremendous load and weight of sin-not his own, for he had no sin. He did it that we might escape. He paid the price. (*Doctrines of Salvation,*3 vols., edited by Bruce R. McConkie [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956], 1: 130.)

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

No member of this Church must ever forget the terrible price paid by our Redeemer, who gave His life that all men might live—the agony of Gethsemane, the bitter mockery of His trial, the vicious crown of thorns tearing at His flesh, the blood cry of the mob before Pilate, the lonely burden of His heavy walk along the way to Calvary, the terrifying pain as great nails pierced His hands and feet, the fevered torture of His body as He hung that tragic day, the Son of God, crying out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

…We cannot forget that. We must never forget it … the Son of God, gave Himself a vicarious sacrifice for each of us. (“Our One Bright Hope,”*Ensign*, Apr. 1994, 4)

**DC 19:18 to bleed at every pore**

Because the Luke version of Gethsemane states that “his sweat was *as it were* great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lu. 22:44, italics added), some historians have concluded that he didn’t really sweat blood—that his sweat merely fell to the earth as if it were blood. The Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon (Mosiah 3:7) make it abundantly clear that Jesus literally sweat blood.

**Russell M. Nelson**

The word Gethsemane comes from two Hebrew roots: *gath*, meaning “press,” and *shemen*, meaning “oil,” especially that of the olive.

There olives had been pressed under the weight of great stone wheels to squeeze precious oil from the olives. So the Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane was literally pressed under the weight of the sins of the world. He sweated great drops of blood—his life’s ‘oil’—which issued from every pore. (“Why This Holy Land?” *Ensign*, Dec. 1989, 17–18)

**John Taylor**

…the Son of God … bore the weight, the responsibility, and the burden of the sins of all men, which, to us, is incomprehensible … Groaning beneath this concentrated load, this intense, incomprehensible pressure, this terrible exaction of Divine justice, from which feeble humanity shrank, and through the agony thus experienced sweating great drops of blood, He was led to exclaim, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” He had wrestled with the superincumbent load in the wilderness, He had struggled against the powers of darkness that had been let loose upon him there; placed below all things, His mind surcharged with agony and pain, lonely and apparently helpless and forsaken, in his agony the blood oozed from His pores. (*Mediation and Atonement* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882], 151.)

**James E. Faust**

One cannot help wondering how many of those drops of precious blood each of us may be responsible for. (“The Supernal Gift of the Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 13)

**DC 19:18 to suffer both body and spirit**

“The Atonement of Jesus Christ cost the blood and life and indescribable suffering of a God. Contrary to the thoughts of some, it was not mental suffering alone; it was intense prolonged anguish, ‘*both* body and spirit’ (D&C 19:18; emphasis added). It was physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional pain of the highest order, all wrapped into one.” (Tad R. Callister, *The Infinite Atonement*, 117)

**DC 19:18 I…would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink**

**Neal A. Maxwell**

Jesus Christ has shown the meaning of the mortal experience by the eloquence of his example and by his having led the way for us in every particular, including his gallantry during the agonies of the Atonement, which he declared caused him to tremble in pain, “and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink” (D&C 19:18). Not shrinking is more important than surviving, and Jesus is our exemplar. I salute him for the eloquence of his example. (“The Pathway of Discipleship,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1998, 13)

**DC 19:19 Nevertheless, glory be to the Father**

**Joseph B. Wirthlin**

Jesus was meek, humble, and selfless. As far as he was concerned, “Glory be to the Father” (D&C 19:19). He claimed no credit for himself. He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). (“Guided by His Exemplary Life,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1995, 37)

**DC 19:19 I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men**

**Spencer W. Kimball**

How grateful we should be that the Lord finished his preparation in our behalf! Now it is up to us to finish our preparations in our own behalf—by partaking of his loving forgiveness, which is the reward he eagerly desires to give all who truly repent. (“The Gospel of Repentance,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1982, 5)

**DC 19:20 confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments**

**Dennis B. Neuenschwander**

I have asked myself, Why would the Lord require confession of us? He already knows everything to begin with. If He knows what we need before we ask, He must also know of our sins, iniquities, transgressions, and faults. Why would He require us to confess them to Him?…

*Confession helps us take responsibility*. Confession is a statement of personal responsibility for our actions…Our accountability to God, as our Father and Creator, is one of the most basic lessons of the gospel. Likewise, the assumption of responsibility for our own actions is one of the strongest indicators that we are becoming more like Him. We cannot develop ourselves spiritually by blaming another for our condition. To do so would be to deny the Atonement of Christ…

*Confession helps us to be healed*. Confession is the beginning of the healing process. Sin destroys our unity with God, for as He says, He “cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31). I love to hear those coming back into the Church after having lost their membership say that they feel whole again….As we desire full and complete healing, so must our confession be full and complete to the Lord. It must also be completely voluntary. There can be no coercion in the confession that leads to healing.

*Confession eliminates adversarial feelings*. Confession eliminates every adversarial relationship in our reconciliation with God…Contrast this with others who will not or do not confess their transgressions. Their lives are filled with bitterness, anger, impatience, and harsh judgment toward others and with fierce justification of their actions. In the absence of true and full confession, we witness the presence of pride and a lack of responsibility for their own actions.

*Confession opens the way to forgiveness and compassion*. **Elder Dallin H. Oaks** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has taught that “since there is no repentance and no forgiveness without confession, all sins must be confessed to the Lord, and serious sins must be confessed to the bishop” (Counsel for Stake Presidencies, videocassette). Too many Church members fear that confession to the bishop or stake president will bring harsh judgment upon them. This indeed might be the case in some instances, but confession is not the key to judgment; confession is the key to compassion. (“The Path of Growth,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1999, 15-16)

**DC 19:20 in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit**

“The withdrawal of the Spirit from Martin Harris occurred when, as a result of his perfidity, he lost the manuscript Book of Lehi which Joseph Smith had translated as the first unit of the Book of Mormon. Others also felt in some measure the depressing anguish and torment that accompanied the Spirit's withdrawal on this occasion. The Prophet's mother later wrote:

“I well remember that day of darkness, both within and without. To us, at least, the heavens seemed clothed with blackness, and the earth shrouded with gloom. I have often said within myself, that if a continual punishment, as severe as that which we experienced on that occasion, were to be inflicted upon the most wicked characters who ever stood upon the footstool of the Almighty—if even their punishment were no greater than that, I should feel to pity their condition.” (Hyrum L. Andrus, *God, Man, and the Universe* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968], 423 - 424.)

**George Q. Cannon**

If any of you have the Spirit of God withdrawn from you, you can have a little foretaste of what the punishment of sinners will be. (Brian H. Stuy, ed., *Collected Discourses,* 5 vols. [Burbank, Calif., and Woodland Hills, Ut.: B.H.S. Publishing, 1987-1992], vol. 5, Feb. 16, 1896)

**DC 19:21 preach naught but repentance**

**Neil L. Andersen**

Repentance is powerful spiritual medicine. There are few spiritual ills it will not cure. Each sin we leave behind through our faith in the living Christ—both those of commission and those of omission—opens spiritual doors. As we feel the potency of repentance, we better understand why Christ admonished the early missionaries of this dispensation to “say nothing but repentance unto this generation” (D&C 6:9; D&C 11:9; see also D&C 19:21). (“The Joy of Becoming Clean,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 52)

**DC 19:22 they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive**

“The milk/meat metaphor, often employed in the scriptures, communicates the principle effectively because of our common experience in feeding children. Children thrive on milk, but would choke on meat. But children also grow up, and their diet changes to suit the growing needs as their bodies mature. And so it is intended in the realm of spiritual things. When we are first introduced to the gospel, we are as children needing doctrinal milk. As we mature in learning and living the gospel, however, it is expected that gradually our spiritual digestive system will be able to handle more meaty doctrines.” (H. Dean Garrett, ed., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint History: Illinois*[Provo: Department of Church History and Doctrine, 1995], 129 - 130.)

**DC 19:23 Learn of me, and listen to my words**

**Chieko N. Okazaki**

These words give me the feeling of such closeness to, such intimacy with the Savior, looking at him, listening to him, learning from him, walking with him, and feeling his peace like his very arms around me. Within each of us is an intense hunger for this intimacy with and closeness to him. I think we all want to feel his spirit around us. (*Lighten Up!* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993], 199.)

**DC 19:23 walk in the meekness of my Spirit and you shall have peace in me**

**Dennis E. Simmons**

Even if all the world is crumbling around us, the promised Comforter will provide His peace as a result of true discipleship. Ultimate total peace will come, of course, because He overcame the world. But we can have His peace with us irrespective of the troubles of the world. His peace is that peace, that serenity, that comfort spoken to our hearts and minds by the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, as we strive to follow Him and keep His commandments. (“His Peace,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 31)

**Rex D. Pinegar**

The Lord has said; “Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.” (D&C 19:23.)

A few days ago I attended the funeral of a lifelong friend, Ralph Poulsen. He was a righteous man of accomplishment and integrity, yet he had to endure the pain and sorrow inflicted upon him by the consequences of a cruel disease. His dear wife, Joyce, suffered also as she was by his side through his agony and pain. As the days and years of suffering went on, she arrived at a time when she felt she could not handle another day. She had done all she could for him. Now a strength beyond her own was needed. In the depth of her sorrow, she pleaded more fervently to God for His help. With the morning came a blessed peace that filled her whole soul—a peace that has continued with her to this day.

There is terrible suffering in our world today. Tragic things happen to good people. God does not cause them, nor does He always prevent them. He does, however, strengthen us and bless us with His peace, through earnest prayer. (“Peace through Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 67)

**DC 19:25 Martin Harris’ 10 Commandments**

Perhaps it is useful to examine the commandments given to Martin Harris in the form of a list. These can be applied to anyone who has been called to the ministry but has a serious need to repent. Are these any less important than the commandments which came from Sinai?

**The 10 Commandments**

1)      I command you…to repent…and…confess your sins (v. 15, 20)

2)      Preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world (v. 21)

3)      Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit (v. 23)

4)      Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife; nor seek thy neighbor’s life (v. 25)

5)      Thou shalt not covet thine own property (v. 26)

6)      Thou shalt pray vocally as well as in thy heart (v. 28, 38)

7)      Thou shalt declare glad tidings…among every people that thou shalt be permitted to see (v. 29)

8)      Of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost (v. 31, 37)

9)      Impart a portion of thy property for the work (v. 34)

10)  Pay the debt thou hast contracted…Release thyself from bondage (v. 35)

**DC 19:26 I command the thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property**

Is it possible to covet that which you already have? Usually, we think of covetousness as a desire for things that belong to others, but consider the following parable:

   The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

   And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

   And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

   And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry.

   But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

   So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (Luke 12:16-21)

Aren’t we coveting our own property when we withhold our goods from the needy? When the poor go without clothing, shelter, and food, isn’t it because the rich are covetous? We must be careful not to become like the rich man who was so proud of himself when he said, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years.”

**DC 19:31 Of tenets thou shalt not talk**

“Sometimes, there is a tendency to want to introduce something ‘new’ into class discussions. Often, these novel concepts are merely the philosophies of men and are not in keeping with the spirit of the gospel or in keeping with the manual’s outline of the lesson. We all have a responsibility to speak only that which is true.” (Sandra Dawn Brimhall, “I Have a Question,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1991, 63)

**DC 19:34 Impart a portion of thy property**

**Dallin H. Oaks**

One of Martin Harris’s greatest contributions to the Church, for which he should be honored for all time, was his financing the publication of the Book of Mormon. In August 1829 he mortgaged his home and farm to Egbert B. Grandin to secure payment on the printer’s contract. Seven months later, the 5,000 copies of the first printing of the Book of Mormon were completed. Later, when the mortgage note fell due, the home and a portion of the farm were sold for $3,000. In this way, Martin Harris was obedient to the Lord’s revelation:

“Thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon. …

“Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage” (D&C 19:26, 35).

Other records and revelations show Martin Harris’s significant involvement in the activities of the restored Church and his standing with God. He was present at the organization of the Church on April 6, 1830, and was baptized that same day. A year later he was called to journey to Missouri with Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Edward Partridge (see D&C 52:24). In Missouri that year—1831—he was commanded to “be an example unto the church, in laying his moneys before the bishop of the church” (D&C 58:35), thus becoming the first man the Lord called by name to consecrate his property in Zion. Two months later he was named with Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Sidney Rigdon, and others to be “stewards over the revelations and commandments” (D&C 70:3; see also D&C 70:1), a direction to publish and circulate what later became the Doctrine and Covenants. (“The Witness: Martin Harris,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 36-37)

**DC 19:35 Pay the debt thou hast contracted…Release thyself from bondage**

**Gordon B. Hinckley**

I am troubled by the huge consumer installment debt which hangs over the people of the nation, including our own people. In March 1997 that debt totaled $1.2 trillion, which represented a 7 percent increase over the previous year… Consumer debt as a percentage of disposable income rose from 16.3 percent in 1993 to 19.3 percent in 1996.

Everyone knows that every dollar borrowed carries with it the penalty of paying interest. When money cannot be repaid, then bankruptcy follows. There were 1,350,118 bankruptcies in the United States last year. This represented a 50 percent increase from 1992…

We are beguiled by seductive advertising. Television carries the enticing invitation to borrow up to 125 percent of the value of one’s home. But no mention is made of interest.

**President J. Reuben Clark Jr**., in the April 1938 general conference, said from this pulpit: “Once in debt, interest is your companion every minute of the day and night; you cannot shun it or slip away from it; you cannot dismiss it; it yields neither to entreaties, demands, or orders; and whenever you get in its way or cross its course or fail to meet its demands, it crushes you” (in *Conference Report*, Apr. 1938, 103).

I recognize that it may be necessary to borrow to get a home, of course. But let us buy a home that we can afford and thus ease the payments which will constantly hang over our heads without mercy or respite for as long as 30 years…

Since the beginnings of the Church, the Lord has spoken on this matter of debt. To Martin Harris through revelation He said: “Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage” (D&C 19:35).

**President Heber J. Grant** spoke repeatedly on this matter from this pulpit. He said: “If there is any one thing that will bring peace and contentment into the human heart, and into the family, it is to live within our means. And if there is any one thing that is grinding and discouraging and disheartening, it is to have debts and obligations that one cannot meet” (*Gospel Standards*, comp. G. Homer Durham [1941], 111).

We are carrying a message of self-reliance throughout the Church. Self-reliance cannot obtain when there is serious debt hanging over a household. One has neither independence nor freedom from bondage when he is obligated to others. (“To the Boys and to the Men,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 53)

**DC 19:38 Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you**

**Rudger Clawson**

The spirit of prayer must be in our hearts unceasingly. We must pray in our families; we must pray in secret; we must pray in our hearts. The spirit of prayer must be with us when we retire at night and when we arise in the morning. It must be upon us when we leave our homes for our daily employment; in the office; in the shop; in the field; in the mountains or in the valleys, or wherever we are. We are told in the words which I have quoted (DC 19:28, 38) that if that spirit is upon us the Lord will bless us, and the blessings which will come in answer to prayer will be of more importance to us than treasures of earth. We know something of the treasures of earth; we realize the value and the desirability of earthly things. We know how they are sought after, and what great sacrifices are made for them. But how much better it is to enjoy the full measure of the Spirit of God which is promised. (*Conference Report, April 1904*, Open Air Meeting 97.)

**Henry B. Eyring**

In that scripture (DC 19:38-41), and in others, it is clear how often we should speak to God: regularly in words, continually in feelings. When the Savior appeared among the people on this continent, after his resurrection, he taught them how to pray. He used the words, “Pray always.” That doesn’t mean now and then. It doesn’t mean to pray only when you feel like it. (“To Draw Closer to God,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 66–67)