

Matthew 5

Matthew 5-7 The Sermon on the Mount

This Sermon on the Mount is the greatest sermon ever given. It sets the standard for the higher law, introduces a new dispensation of truth, and teaches more about true discipleship than any other passage of scripture.

Joseph F. Smith

"Read the Sermon on the Mount, and then ask yourselves whether it is beyond and above everything ever taught by man. It confirms me in the belief that Jesus was not merely a man, but that He was God manifest in the flesh. It is the doctrine of eternal life, by which if a man shall live he shall never die; by which if he shall walk he shall walk in pleasant paths; and by which if he shall abide, he shall know the truth, and the truth will make him free." (*Collected Discourses 1886-1898*, ed. by Brian Stuy, vol. 5, Joseph F. Smith, Oct. 18, 1896)

Matt 5:1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain

"This mountain evokes another ancient mountain from the Old Testament: Mount Sinai, where Jehovah delivered the great law to Moses. The allusion is no accident. Jehovah had again ascended a mount from which he would deliver another law." (Catherine Thomas, *Studies in Scripture: The Gospels*, p. 236)

Matt 5:3-12 The Beatitudes

The footnotes for Matt 5:3 state, "The Latin *beatus* is the basis of the English 'beatitude,' meaning 'to be fortunate,' 'to be happy,' or 'to be blessed.'" The blessings of the Beatitudes come not from natural law but from a higher law. Indeed, the blessings of the Beatitudes don't seem to follow a natural or logical pattern in the least.

The gospel is full of irony. Nowhere are these doctrinal ironies more appreciated than in the Beatitudes. The concept that those who are least in worldly things will be made great in heavenly things is a constant theme. The poor in spirit will be rich in the kingdom of heaven, the mourner shall receive comfort, the meek will become great by inheritance, and those who suffer the most spiritual hunger are those who will receive the greatest spiritual feast. **Neal A. Maxwell** remarked, "Whereas the natural man covets praise

and riches, the men and women of Christ know that such things are but the 'drop' (D&C 117:8). Human history's happiest irony will be that the covenant-keeping, unselfish individuals will finally receive 'all that [the] Father hath!' (D&C 84:38.)." (*Men and Women of Christ*, p. 14) The Beatitudes remind us that the last shall be first, and the first last...And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matt 20:16; 23:12).

Harold B. Lee

"May you make the Beatitudes the constitution of your own lives and thus receive the blessedness promised therein." (*Stand Ye In Holy Places*, p. 348)

Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit

Of all the qualities discussed in the Beatitudes, the meaning of the term poor in spirit is the least obvious. Although a simpler term could have been rendered, the term *poor* in spirit contrasts the *richness* of the blessing received, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). Therefore, all that my Father hath shall be given unto him (DC 84:38). But blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs (DC 56:18).

The poor in spirit are not "spiritually poor" or bereft of spiritual attributes. Rather, the term means to be humble, submissive, spiritually dependent, and penitent-in effect those who are poor in spirit have a broken heart and contrite spirit.

Robert E. Wells

"To be poor in spirit means to be humble, teachable, contrite, meek, obedient. As the Phillips Modern Translation states, the meek are those who 'know their need for God.' To be poor in spirit is to recognize that we are not self-sufficient spiritually (or materially, for that matter), but rather that we are always in debt to our Heavenly Father, from who all blessings flow. In fact, our posture before our God is as the needy, even as beggars. **President Harold B. Lee** spoke on this subject in the following way:

"To be poor in spirit is to feel yourselves as the spiritually needy, even dependent upon the Lord for your clothes, your food, the air you breathe...It is indeed a sad thing for one, because of his wealth or learning or worldly position, to think himself independent of this spiritual need. [Poor in spirit] is the opposite of pride or self-conceit. To the worldly rich it is that 'he must possess his wealth as if he possessed it not' and be willing to say without regret, if he were suddenly to meet financial disaster, as did Job, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21). (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, pp. 343-4)" (Robert E. Wells, *The Mount and the Master*, pp. 4-5)

Jeffrey R. Holland

"...the Book of Mormon sermon added the phrase 'who come unto me...'. Obviously in the 3 Nephi rendering, being poor in spirit is not in itself a virtue, but it will be so if such humility brings one to claim the blessings of the kingdom through the waters of baptism, making covenants, and moving toward all the promises given to covenant-making disciples. It is significant that the phrase 'come unto me' is used at least four more times in the twenty or so verses that follow this one." (*Christ And The New Covenant*, p. 263)

Matt 5:4 Blessed are they that mourn

No one should doubt God's ability to comfort the mourner. The very suffering of the atonement increased Jesus' already divine empathy, he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy...that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people (Alma 7:12). **Tad Callister** noted:

"**Elder Neal A. Maxwell** gave this insight into the relationship between the Atonement and the Savior's succoring powers: 'His empathy and capacity to succor us-in our own sickness, temptations, or sins-were demonstrated and perfected in the process of the great atonement.' He also said, 'The marvelous atonement brought about not only immortality but also the final perfection of Jesus' empathetic and helping capacity.'"

"...No mortal can cry out, 'he does not understand my plight for my trials are unique.' There is nothing outside the scope of the Savior's experience. As Elder Maxwell observed, 'None of us can tell Christ anything about depression.' As a result of his mortal experience, culminating in the

Atonement, the Savior knows understands, and feels every human condition, every human woe, and every human loss. He can comfort as no other. He can lift burdens as no other. He can listen as no other." (Tad Callister, *Infinite Atonement*, pp. 207-9)

Bruce R. McConkie

"Those who are bereft of loved ones, having learned the purposes of the Lord in the brief separation called death, shall be comforted. The peace that passeth understanding shall rest upon all those who have a knowledge of the plan of salvation. What greater comfort is there than to know that lost loved ones shall be returned to the family unit, and that all the saints shall reign in joy and peace forever? And further: When He comes again whose right it is to rule, he 'shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.' (Rev. 21:4.) They that mourn shall be comforted!" (*The Mortal Messiah*, Book 2, p. 121)

Russell M. Nelson

"My heart goes out to each individual who bears the burden of mourning. I share my feelings of empathy and sympathy. The separation imposed by the departure of a loved one evokes pangs of sorrow and shock among those left behind. The hurt is real. Only its intensity varies. Even though we understand the doctrine-even though we dearly love God and his eternal plan-mourning remains. It is not only normal; it is a healthy reaction. Mourning is one of the purest expressions of deep love. It is a perfectly natural response-in complete accord with divine commandment: 'Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die.' (D&C 42:45.)

"Moreover, we can't fully appreciate joyful reunions later without tearful separations now. The only way to take sorrow out of death is to take love out of life.

"...Where can we turn for peace? We can come unto the Lord Jesus Christ. With consummate love, he said: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' (John 14:27.) His peace differs from that offered by any other. His is the peace provided by our knowledge of the resurrection. His gift of life after death applies to all mankind.

"...Grief is assuaged as his peace enters our lives. It brings true understanding and calm assurance that all is well. 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:7.) Peace comes when we go directly to our best friend-the Prince of Peace. We find solace when we lose ourselves in service to him and to our neighbors." (*The Gateway We Call Death*, p. 22-24)

Robert E. Wells

"Since mourning is so universal, the Lord must have a purpose for having us experience it. There is no doubt but that he softens and molds us and touches us most deeply when we are mourning." (*The Mount and the Master*, p. 20)

Matt 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth

Although *meek* rhymes with *weak*, the words have no other similarities. Indeed, it is possible to be both meek and bold, for scriptural meekness and spiritual bravado are not mutually exclusive. No one taught this better than the **Prophet Joseph Smith**:

"Some of the company thought I was not a very meek Prophet; so I told them: 'I am meek and lowly in heart,' and will personify Jesus for a moment, to illustrate the principle, and cried out with a loud voice, 'Woe unto you, ye doctors; woe unto you, ye lawyers; woe unto you, ye scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites!' But you cannot find the place where I ever went that I found fault with their food, their drink, their house, their lodgings; no, never; and this is what is meant by the meekness and lowliness of Jesus." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 270, see also *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, p. 210-11)

It was the meek and lowly Jesus who twice cleansed the Temple. It was the meek and lowly Jesus who had no fear of offending the most powerful religious and political leaders of his day.

Spencer W. Kimball

"If the Lord was meek and lowly and humble, then to become humble one must do what he did in boldly denouncing evil, bravely advancing righteous work, courageously meeting every problem, becoming the master of

himself and the situations about him and being...oblivious to personal credit.

"Humility is not pretentious, presumptuous, or proud. It is not weak, vacillating, or servile...Humble and meek properly suggest virtues, not weaknesses. They suggest a consistent mildness of temper and an absence of wrath...Humility is teachableness...It is not boastful, because when one becomes conscious of his great humility, he has already lost it." (*Improvement Era*, Aug. 1963, pp. 656-7, 704)

Neal A. Maxwell

"Meekness ranks low on the mortal scale of things, yet high on God's: 'For none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart.' (Moroni 7:44.) The rigorous requirements of Christian discipleship are clearly unattainable without meekness. In fact, meekness is needed in order to be spiritually successful, whether in matters of the intellect, in the management of power, in the dissolution of personal pride, or in coping with the challenges of daily life. Jesus, the carpenter-who, with Joseph, 'undoubtedly had experience making yokes' -gave us that marvelous metaphor: 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.' (Matthew 11:29.) The yoke of obedience to Him is far better than servitude to sin, but the demands are real.

"...meekness has a metabolism that actually requires very little praise or recognition-of which there is usually such a shortage anyway.

"...Meekness also protects us from the fatigue of being easily offended. There are so many just waiting to be offended. They are so alerted to the possibility that they will not be treated fairly, they almost invite the verification of their expectations! The meek, not posted on such a fatiguing alert, find rest from this form of fatigue.

"...Bruising as the tumble off the peak of pride is, it may be necessary...Meekness enables us, after a tumble, to pick ourselves up but without putting others down blamefully.

"...The deserving and blessed meek will not only eventually inherit the earth, they will do so when this planet is really worth inheriting!"

"...If meek, we will place all we have on the altar of the Lord and will not ask for a receipt!" (*Meek and Lowly*, pp. ix, 55, 57, 58, 95, 207)

Neal A. Maxwell

"Human suffering does not automatically produce sweetness and character unless meekness is present. Meekness is the mulch that must go in the soil of adversity in order for empathy to grow and in order for character to grow. Jesus could not have become the most empathetic person had he not been the most meek person." (*The Neal A. Maxwell Quote Book*, compiled by Cory H. Maxwell, p. 209)

LeGrand Richards

"The earth in its celestialized form shall become the abode of those who are worthy of celestial glory, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life:

'...And again, verily I say unto you, the earth abideth the law of a celestial kingdom, for it filleth the measure of its creation, and transgresseth not the law-

Wherefore, it shall be sanctified; yea, notwithstanding it shall die, it shall be quickened again, and shall abide the power by which it is quickened, and the righteous shall inherit it.' (D&C 88:25-26.)

'But blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs.

For behold, the Lord shall come, and his recompense shall be with him, and he shall reward every man, and the poor shall rejoice;

And their generations shall inherit the earth from generation to generation, forever and ever' (D&C 56:18-20.)

"Therefore, with our friends and our families in our resurrected bodies, through our faithfulness, we may inherit this earth 'from generation to generation, forever and ever.'" (*A Marvelous Work And A Wonder*, p. 328-9)

Joseph Fielding Smith

"This earth is going to become a celestial body and is going to be a fit abode for celestial beings only; the others will have to go somewhere else, where they belong. This earth will be reserved for those who are entitled to

exaltation, and they are the meek, spoken of by our Savior, who shall inherit the earth. When the Lord said the meek shall inherit the earth, He had reference to those who are willing to keep the commandments of the Lord in righteousness and thus receive exaltation." (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1942, p. 28)

Matt 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness

Compare Commentary for 3 Nephi 12:6.

Russell M. Nelson

"I was with Elder Mark E. Petersen in the Holy Land in October 1983, during his last mortal journey. Elder Petersen was not well. Evidences of his consuming malignancy were painfully real to him, yet he derived strength from the Savior he served. Following a night of intense suffering, exacerbated by pangs of his progressive inability to eat or to drink, Elder Petersen addressed throngs assembled at the Mount of the Beatitudes to hear his discourse on the Sermon on the Mount. After he recited 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness,' he departed from the biblical text and pleaded this question: 'Do you know what it is to be really hungry? Do you know what it is to really be thirsty? Do you desire righteousness as you would desire food under extreme conditions or drink under extreme conditions? [The Savior] expects us to literally hunger and thirst after righteousness and seek it with all our hearts!'

"I was one of the few present on that occasion who knew how hungry and thirsty Elder Petersen really was. His encroaching cancer had deprived him of relief from physical hunger and thirst, so he understood that doctrine. He withstood the trial. He thanked the Lord, who lent him power to preach his last major sermon at the sacred site where Jesus himself had preached." (*The Power Within Us*, p. 21)

Robert E. Wells

"How many people strive for higher spiritual levels as though they truly hungered and thirsted after them? To hunger and thirst for something involves strife, struggles, work, sacrifice, and a host of other efforts...Perhaps you have heard the story of the philosopher who held a young disciple's head under water until the latter gasped for air. The philosopher then told the disciple, 'When you want knowledge as much as

you wanted air while you were under water, you are ready to study with me.'

"The highest blessings of the gospel are not for the faint-hearted, coolly rational, theoretical philosopher, nor for the person who is merely intellectually curious. Those great blessings are reserved for stouthearted souls who hunger and thirst for greater personal righteousness and who are willing to pay the price to achieve it.

"...The blessings promised are immeasurable. Remember the woman of Samaria at the well? The Savior told her (and this applies to all of us), 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life...He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' (Jn 4:14; 6:35)" (*The Mount and the Master*, pp. 42-3)

Bruce R. McConkie

"Filled with the Holy Ghost! As starving men crave a crust of bread, as choking men thirst for water, so do the righteous yearn for the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is a Revelator: he is a Sanctifier; he reveals truth, and he cleanses human souls. He is the Spirit of Truth, and his baptism is one of fire; he burns dross and evil out of repentant souls as though by fire. The gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest of all the gifts of God, as pertaining to this life; and those who enjoy that gift here and now, will inherit eternal life hereafter, which is the greatest of all the gifts of God in eternity." (*The Mortal Messiah*, Book 2, p. 122)

Matt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy

For a discussion on mercy we will turn to one of the Lord's most merciful servants, **Joseph Smith**. Few men in history have been so routinely offended and betrayed by close friends, some of whom later begged his mercy. To one repentant traitor, Joseph mercifully declared, "when we read your letter-truly our hearts were melted into tenderness and compassion when we ascertained your resolves...Believing your confession to be real, and your repentance genuine, I shall be happy once again to give you the right hand of fellowship, and rejoice over the returning prodigal." (*Teachings*, pp. 165-6) It is no wonder that the forgiven man, William W. Phelps, later penned the words to the well-known hymn, "Praise to the Man." Joseph lived by the principle previously revealed through him, Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one

another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin. I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. (DC 64:9-10, see also Matt 18:23-35)

Joseph Smith

"Ever keep in exercise the principles of mercy, and be ready to forgive our brother on the first intimations of repentance, and asking forgiveness; and should we even forgive our brother, or even our enemy, before he repent or ask forgiveness, our heavenly Father would be equally as merciful unto us.

"...Nothing is so much calculated to lead people to forsake sin as to take them by the hand, and watch over them with tenderness. When persons manifest the least kindness and love to me, O what power it has over my mind, while the opposite course has a tendency to harrow up all the harsh feelings and depress the human mind....The nearer we get to our heavenly Father, the more we are disposed to look with compassion on perishing souls; we feel that we want to take them upon our shoulders, and cast their sins behind our backs. My talk is intended for all this [relief] society; if you would have God have mercy on you, have mercy on one another. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp.155, 240-1)

Harold B. Lee

"Our salvation rests upon the mercy we show to others. Unkind and cruel words, or wanton acts of cruelty toward man or beast, even though in seeming retaliation, disqualify the perpetrator in his claims for mercy when he has need of mercy in the day of judgment before earthly or heavenly tribunals. Is there one who has never been wounded by the slander of another whom he thought to be his friend? Do you remember the struggle you had to refrain from retribution? Blessed are all you who are merciful, for you shall obtain mercy!" (*Stand Ye In Holy Places*, p. 347)

Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God

The privilege of seeing the Almighty depends on the purification and sanctification of the individual. While most of the Christian world teaches as irrefutable that, No man hath seen God at any time (Jn 1:18). Many in the Church understand this scripture to mean that they shall see God in the resurrection, while others understand this to apply to both the mortal and resurrected spheres according to the word of the Lord, sanctify yourselves

that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will (DC 88:68, see also DC 88:49-61).

Bruce R. McConkie

"We have the power-and it is our privilege-so to live, that becoming pure in heart, we shall see the face of God while we yet dwell as mortals in a world of sin and sorrow.

"This is the crowning blessing of mortality. It is offered by that God who is no respecter of persons to all the faithful in his kingdom. 'Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.' (D&C 93:1.)" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1977, p. 52)

LeGrand Richards

"'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' (Matt. 5:8.) What a promise! I believe that. I believe every man or woman who lives here in mortality in purity before God will stand in his presence and have his benediction, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' We have been told in this conference that no unclean thing shall ever enter his presence. I believe that with all my heart." (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1964, p. 67)

Dallin H. Oaks

"The issue is not what we have *done* but what we have *become*. And what we have become is the result of more than our actions. It is also the result of our attitudes, our motives, and our desires. Each of these is an ingredient of the pure heart...To become pure in heart--to achieve exaltation--we must alter our attitudes and priorities to a condition of spirituality, we must control our thoughts, we must reform our motives, and we must perfect our desires." (*Pure in Heart*, pp. 39-40 as taken from *The Mount and the Master*, by Robert E. Wells, p. 79)

Matt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God

Bruce R. McConkie

"The gospel of peace makes men children of God! Christ came to bring peace-peace on earth and good will to men. His gospel gives peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. He is the Prince of peace. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them who preach the gospel of peace, who say unto Zion: The God reigneth! Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with his saints. By this shall all men know the Lord's disciples: They are peacemakers; they seek to compose difficulties; they hate war and love peace; they invite all men to forsake evil, overcome the world, flee from avarice and greed, stand in holy places, and receive for themselves that peace which passeth understanding, that peace which comes only by the power of the Spirit." (*The Mortal Messiah*, 2:123)

Harold B. Lee

"Peacemakers shall be called the children of God. The trouble-maker, the striker against law and order, the leader of the mob, the law-breaker are prompted by motives of evil; and unless they desist, they will be known as the children of Satan rather than God. Withhold yourselves from him who would cause disquieting doubts by making light of sacred things, for he seeks not for peace but to spread confusion. That one who is quarrelsome or contentious, and whose arguments are for other purposes than to resolve the truth, is violating a fundamental principle laid down by the Master as an essential in the building of a full rich life. 'Peace and goodwill to men on earth' was the angel song that heralded the birth of the Prince of Peace." (*Stand Ye in Holy Places*, p. 347)

Matt 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake

Harold B. Lee

"To be persecuted for righteousness' sake in a great cause where truth and virtue and honor are at stake is God-like. Always there have been martyrs to every great cause. The great harm that may come from persecution is not from the persecution itself but from the possible effect it may have upon the persecuted who may thereby be deterred in their zeal for the righteousness of their cause. Much of that persecution comes from lack of understanding, for men are prone to oppose that which they do not comprehend. Some of it comes from men intent upon evil. But from whatever cause, persecution seems to be so universal against those engaged in a righteous cause that the Master warns us, 'Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.' (Luke 6:26.)

"May youth everywhere remember that warning when you are hissed and scoffed at because you refuse to compromise your standards of abstinence, honesty, and morality in order to win the applause of the crowd. If you stand firmly for the right, despite the jeers of the crowd or even physical violence, you shall be crowned with the blessedness of eternal joy. Who knows but that again in our day some of the saints or even apostles, as in former days, may be required to give their lives in defense of the truth. If that time should come, God grant they will not fail." (*Stand Ye In Holy Places*, p. 348)

Joseph Smith

"Those who cannot endure persecution, and stand in the day of affliction, cannot stand in the day when the Son of God shall burst the veil, and appear in all the glory of His Father, with all the holy angels." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 42)

Neal A. Maxwell

"The straight and narrow is the path of perspiration and is too arduous to be free from adversity. There are many ways in which the disciple can suffer as a Christian, and for righteousness' sake. Practical, perceptive Peter said, 'For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, *when ye do well*, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.' (1 Peter 2:20. Italics added.)

"...those who have suffered most, and for the right reasons, will have stretched their capacity for joy and happiness.

"Peter says, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, . . . but let none of you suffer as a murderer or as a thief. . . .' (1 Peter 4:14) To 'suffer as a Christian' or for 'righteousness' sake' is a consequence to be considered as separate and apart from the self-inflicted misery that too often grows out of our failures to be Christian." (*A Time To Choose*, p. 43)

Matt 5:13 *Ye are the salt of the earth*

Under the Law of Moses, salt was used in conjunction with the offering of a meat offering. It was termed 'the salt of the covenant' or 'a covenant of salt' (Lev 2:13; Num 18:19). "Salt, a preservative, represented the covenant between God and Israel." (Catherine Thomas, *Studies in Scripture: The Gospels*, p. 239) The analogy is uplifting-just as natural salt preserves meat

from spoiling, the Lord's covenant people, 'the salt of the earth,' preserve the earth from a very literal destruction. The word of the Lord concerning Zarahemla applies equally well to the entire earth in the latter-days, 'I would cause that fire should come down out of heaven and destroy it. But behold, it is for the righteous' sake that it is spared' (Hel 13:13-14). Consider also Gen 18:20-33; 19:24-25; DC 2:1-3.

James E. Talmage

"Salt is the great preservative; as such it has had practical use since very ancient times. Salt was prescribed as an essential addition to every meat offering under the Mosaic law. Long before the time of Christ, the use of salt had been accorded a symbolism of fidelity, hospitality, and covenant. To be of use salt must be pure; to be of any saving virtue as salt, it must be salt indeed, and not the product of chemical alteration or of earthy admixture, whereby its saltiness or 'savor' would be lost; and, as worthless stuff, it would be fit only to be thrown away. Against such change of faith, against such admixture with the sophistries, so-called philosophies, and heresies of the times, the disciples were especially warned." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 232)

Carlos E. Asay

"How many times have we read, or heard others read, this scripture? Yet, do we understand fully the 'salt of the earth' message? Are we conversant with the analogy? Are we responding properly to its implications?

"...When the Lord used the expression 'savor of men,' he was speaking of those who represent him. He was referring to those who have repented, who have been washed clean in the waters of baptism, and who have covenanted to take upon them his name and his cause. Moreover, he was speaking of those who would share by covenant his priesthood power. He was speaking of you and me.

"A world-renowned chemist told me that salt will not lose its savor with age. Savor is lost through mixture and contamination. Similarly, priesthood power does not dissipate with age; it, too, is lost through mixture and contamination. When a young man or older man mixes his thoughts with graphic literature, he suffers a loss of savor. When a priesthood bearer mixes his speech with lies or profanity, he suffers a loss of savor. When one of us follows the crowd and becomes involved in immoral acts and the

use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other injurious substances, he loses savor.

"...I pray that all of us will appreciate more perfectly the words of the Savior: 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' I pray that we will carry this designation faithfully and honorably." (*Conference Report*, Apr. 1980)

Delbert Stapley

"One of the best compliments an individual can say of another is that he or she is the 'salt of the earth.' It is most meaningful and suggests unquestioned Christlike character and conduct, uprightness, honesty, spirituality, sincerity of purpose, dignity, and other noble character virtues and qualities patterned after the divine nature of our Heavenly Father." (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1964, p. 65)

Matt 5:13 Ye are the light of the world

An interesting difference between the Nephi and Matthew versions is found in the salt and light verses. To the Nephites, the Lord says, 'I give unto to you to be the light of this people,' indicating that the Lord is giving the people the assignment or charge to be the light of their people, whereas the Old World apostles were to be an example to the entire world. Scholars have debated about whether this scripture applies to all Christians or just the Twelve. From the Book of Mormon, we learn that the Lord expects all his disciples to be a light to their respective peoples 'that they may see your good words and glorify your Father which is in heaven' (v. 16).

Gordon B. Hinckley

"I wish to say that none of us ever need hesitate to speak up for this Church, for its doctrine, for its people, for its divine organization and divinely given responsibility. It is true. It is the work of God. The only things that can ever embarrass this work are acts of disobedience to its doctrine and standards by those of its membership. That places upon each of us a tremendous responsibility. This work will be judged by what the world sees of our behavior. God give us the will to walk with faith, the discipline to do what is right at all times and in all circumstances, the resolution to make of our lives a declaration of this cause before all who see us. (*Ensign*, November 1996, p. 51.)

Franklin D. Richards

"Our light should not be hid under the bed or under a bushel, but it ought to be lit up here in these mountains, and it has got to shine so that this whole nation shall see it. And all nations must see and have a chance of accepting or rejecting the Gospel. We must fraternize with them, as far as is right and proper, so that we may show them the excellency there is in the knowledge of God...

"Now, then, we ought to understand that our labors and our conduct individually and collectively are open before the world, our conduct and attitude as a people before the nation, should be according to the dignity of our position, that the nations of the earth may see and know we are true to our God, to our professions of faith, and that we are honestly pushing forward the kingdom of God. This should be the spirit of the whole people. We should be ready to make any sacrifice, and discharge every obligation necessary for the advancement of His kingdom." (*Collected Discourses*, Vol.1, Franklin D. Richards, April 8, 1888)

Eldred G. Smith

"Today, my brothers and sisters, that command is directed to us. We have received a light and knowledge that was given to the disciples of old. It is our responsibility to let our light so shine until it really reaches the ends of the earth.

"If each individual member of this entire Church would sincerely strive to do his or her best, just think what might be accomplished. We can spread gloom around us, we can spread good cheer, or we can be such an example of righteousness that others will want to follow the pattern of our lives. A chain reaction goes on that is endless in its effects. When a knowledge of the divinity of the gospel is given to you, you can pass it on to others. If you are living the gospel, they will hear your testimony. Remember the saying: 'How can I hear what you are saying, when what you are is ringing so loudly in my ears?'" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1951, p. 81)

Matt 5:17 I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil

Bruce R. McConkie

"Now Jesus came to restore that gospel fulness which men had enjoyed before the day of Moses, before the time of the lesser order. Obviously he did not come to destroy what he himself had revealed to Moses anymore

than a college professor destroys arithmetic by revealing the principles of integral calculus to his students. Jesus came to build on the foundation Moses laid. By restoring the fulness of the gospel he fulfilled the need for adherence to the terms and conditions of the preparatory gospel. No one any longer needed to walk by the light of the moon, for the sun had risen in all its splendor.

"Concerning the law of Moses, Jesus, appearing as a resurrected being to the Nephites, taught:

'Marvel not that I said unto you that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

Behold, I say unto you that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses. Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfil the law; therefore it hath an end.

Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled.

And because I said unto you that old things have passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come.

For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled; but the law which was given unto Moses hath an end in me.

Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.

Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments. And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.' (3 Ne. 15:2-10.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:219-220)

Matt 5:21-30 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother...shall be in danger of the judgment

Every sin is preceded by a sinful thought which is preceded by a sinful desire. Desires, then, become the defining characteristic of one's spiritual integrity. However, concerning some sins, the Law of Moses restricted one's action but said nothing of one's thoughts or desires. The higher law teaches that evil thoughts and desires are just as destructive. Therefore the anger which encourages the premeditation which prompts the murder must be proscribed. The lust which encourages the sensual thought which prompts the adulterous act must be avoided. It's no longer a law of "Thou shalt not do this, but you can think whatever you want!" The new law warned against evil thoughts and

desires. Alma was ahead of his time when he counseled, yea, let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord; yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever (Alma 37:37). James Allen said

"A man does not come to the almshouse or the jail by the tyranny of fate or circumstance, but by the pathway of groveling thoughts and base desires. Nor does a pure-minded man fall suddenly into crime by stress of mere external force; the criminal thought had long been secretly fostered in the heart, and the hour of opportunity revealed its gathered power. Circumstance does not make the man; it reveals him to himself." (*As a Man Thinketh* as taken from *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 105)

Bruce C. Hafen

"Moses and other Israelite leaders at times tried to teach the broad, positive doctrine of the higher law, but over time the lower law tended to emphasize negative restrictions on conduct—have no other gods, do not commit adultery. This emphasis is less concerned with motive or purpose, less demanding that we *do* anything affirmative, much less *be* anything that extends beyond what we are. The contrast with the higher law is staggering: 'Love thy wife with all thy heart' (DC 42:22); and 'Be ye therefore perfect.' (Matthew 5:48.) The higher law asks not only for new behavior; it asks for a new heart." (*The Broken Heart*, p. 162)

Neal A. Maxwell

"Further, the presence of the Holy Ghost in one's life, insofar as it reshapes our desires and our appetites, can move us from a position in which, at first, we wisely avoid temptations, to a point finally from which the things alien to the Spirit of God are diminished in their attractiveness. Just as what is at first a duty can later become a delight, so the dangerous things for which we may now hunger can be replaced by desires for things that are not only harmless, but that will also help us." (*That My Family Should Partake*, p. 83 - 84)

David O. McKay

"The greatest battles in life are fought within the silent chambers of the soul." (*Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 415)

Matt 5:22 **whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause**

Bruce R. McConkie

"[The phrase] 'without a cause' [was] deleted from both the Inspired Version and the Book of Mormon accounts. According to the gospel standard, unrighteous anger is evil whether provocation precedes it or not." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:222)

Matt 5:25 if thou...rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee

Bruce R. McConkie

"Not a remembrance that you are angry with your brother, for it is assumed that the true saint will have overcome his own ill feelings, but a remembrance that your brother hath aught against you! The command: 'Go to him; do not wait for him to come to you, simply because you are the one who has been wronged.' How often one person supposes he has been wronged, or imagines another is offended at him, when a simple brotherly explanation would remove the source of all possible ill feeling. Or, how often are actual cases of resentment and antagonism cleared up when the hand of fellowship, literally and verbally, is extended." (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:222-23)

3 Ne 12:28 whosoever looketh on a woman, to lust after her

The punishment for the sin of lust is expressly given, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear...and if he repents not he shall be cast out (DC 63:16, DC 42:23).

Gordon B. Hinckley

"The girl you marry can expect you to come to the marriage altar absolutely clean. She can expect you to be a young man of virtue in thought and word and deed. I plead with you boys tonight to keep yourselves free from the stains of the world...You must not fool around with the Internet to find pornographic material...You must not rent videos with pornography of any kind...Stay away from pornography as you would avoid a serious disease. It is as destructive. It can become habitual, and those who indulge in it get so they cannot leave it alone. It is addictive...it seduces and destroys its victims...I plead with you young men not to get involved in its use. You simply cannot afford to. The girl you marry is worthy of a husband whose life has not been tainted by this ugly and corrosive material." (*Ensign*, May

1998, p. 49 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 337)

Spencer W. Kimball

"Each person must keep himself clean and free from lusts...He must shun ugly, polluted thoughts and acts as he would an enemy. Pornographic and erotic stories and pictures are worse than polluted food. Shun them. The body has power to rid itself of sickening food. The person who entertains filthy stories or pornographic pictures and literature records them in his marvelous human computer, the brain, which can't forget such filth. Once recorded, it will always remain there, subject to recall." (*Ensign*, July 1978, pp. 3-7 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 335)

Howard W. Hunter

"A man who holds the priesthood shows perfect moral fidelity to his wife and gives her no reason to doubt his faithfulness. A husband is to love his wife with all his heart and cleave unto her and none else (see D&C 42:22-26). **President Spencer W. Kimball** explained:

'The words *none else* eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse' (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, p. 250).

"The Lord forbids and his church condemns any and every intimate relationship outside of marriage. Infidelity on the part of a man breaks the heart of his wife and loses her confidence and the confidence of his children (see Jacob 2:35).

"Be faithful in your marriage covenants in thought, word, and deed. Pornography, flirtations, and unwholesome fantasies erode one's character and strike at the foundation of a happy marriage. Unity and trust within a marriage are thereby destroyed. One who does not control his thoughts and thus commits adultery in his heart, if he does not repent, shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear." (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1994)

Matt 5:29-30 if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee

Here, Christ constructs a metaphor for the soul. Certainly, we are not to perform self-mutilating procedures in order to enter heaven. Our souls, on the other hand, may need such drastic surgery. For the soul, such procedures are not mutilating but reconstructive in nature. If our carnal desires are for lust or murder, that element of our personality must be cut out and cast off. If most of our desires are good, but there is one area in which our desires are for wicked or deviant behavior, those desires must be removed at all costs. To thoroughly discard those sinful thoughts requires a process as painful as amputation without anesthesia.

Though someone is told, "you were born that way, you can't help it," that is no excuse. In the metaphor the individual must discard the offensive body part—even though he was born with an offensive hand or eye. There is no room for the complaint, "God made me this way!" Better to cut off a hand, than to face God's judgment with two hands and 'a bright recollection of all [your] guilt' (Alma 11:43). Then, the wound will be deeper and more painful—for the truth will cut to the very center (1 Ne 16:2).

"In a literal sense, we would be better off not having a mouth than having one that uttered blasphemies, or bore false witness, or was a degrading influence to others. It would be better not to have feet that are swift to run to mischief or hands that shed innocent blood. But the Lord of Life is speaking not in literal terms but in metaphoric terms of the need to rid ourselves of the elements in our personality or our associations that might dilute our discipleship. Just as it is excruciatingly painful to pluck out an eye, so it is painful to excise sin from our souls." (Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God: Reflections on the Cost of Discipleship*, p. 53)

Matt 5:32 whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery

This passage is a confusing scripture for many. The word of the Lord seems to justify divorce only in the situation of infidelity. Furthermore, the scripture sounds like it is the divorce itself which makes an adulterer of the individual. But, in Mark, we learn that the adultery occurs when the divorced person is remarried (Mark 10:11-12). Yet, many good people, though married in the temple, have been remarried without being charged in Church courts with adultery. Certainly, we don't consider those who have been divorced and remarried (for reasons other than infidelity) to be adulterers. So what is meant by this passage?

As Latter-day Saints, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, we enjoy the blessings of higher law as given by the Savior. We glory in the fact that the law has been given in its fullness. Yet, unbeknownst to many, we really aren't living the law as it has been revealed. The most glaring example is that of the law of consecration and the United Order. The saints tried it, and failed. Few would be so bold as to claim that the saints of today are ready for this unselfish plan to be reinstated. Yet, the mercy of the Lord grants us our weakness and we live the law "in spirit" only.

The same can be said of the law of celestial marriage. In the most perfect form of the higher law, divorce is not allowable except for cases of infidelity. But today, we are not living that law in its fullest, most perfect form. Again, the mercy of the Lord grants us our weakness and allows the divorce of individuals married in the temple because we as a Church are not ready to live the higher law. What the Lord said to the Pharisees about Moses' day applies equally well to ours, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so (Matt 19:8). The Lord continues:

'And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.
His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry.

But he said unto them, All *men* cannot receive this saying, save *they* to whom it is given.' (Matt 19:8-11)

"Jesus said that all could not 'receive this saying'-the whole message of verses 4 through 9 [of Matt 19]-'save they to whom it is given.' (v. 11) Obviously, he was referring to a law of marriage higher than some of the social practices of that time...The reader can also see the Lord's recognition of persons whose current societal circumstances are different from the celestial standard.

"Elder Bruce R. McConkie has commented,

'Divorce is not part of the gospel plan no matter what kind of marriage is involved. But because men [and women] in practice do not always live in harmony with gospel standards, the Lord permits divorce [as in Moses' time] for one reason or another, depending upon the spiritual stability of the people involved...

'In this day divorces are permitted in accordance with civil statutes, and the divorced persons are permitted by the Church to marry again without the stain of immorality which under a higher system would attend such a course.' (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:547)

"If our societies were on a higher plane, then, marriage covenants would be held in great, sacred trust; essentially, divorce would not exist or be considered except for truly serious reasons such as adultery. I would also suggest that in a higher system, with individuals living in harmony with all the Lord's teachings, there would be no such serious problems and thus no divorce.

"Unfortunately, our societies are less than ideal. Some persons do live in unbearably difficult marital circumstances, suffering as victims of spouse abuse, substance abuse, promiscuity, and other evils that are sometimes addressed through divorce as a last resort. In such cases, the Lord in his mercy 'permits his agents to exercise the power to loose [to authorize divorce] as well as the power to bind.' (**Bruce R. McConkie**, *Mormon Doctrine*, p. 204)

"President David O. McKay stated,

'In the light of scripture, ancient and modern, we are justified in concluding that Christ's ideal pertaining to marriage is the unbroken home, and conditions that cause divorce are violations of his divine teachings...There may be circumstances which make the continuance of the marriage state a greater evil than divorce. But these are extreme cases-they are the mistakes, the calamities in the realm of marriage. If we could remove them I would say there never should be a divorce. It is Christ's ideal that home and marriage should be perpetual-eternal.' (*Treasures of Life*, p. 66)"

(Jonathan M. Chamberlain, "I Have A Question," *Ensign*, Jan. 1993, pp. 59-60)

Matt 5:34 I say unto you, Swear not at all

There is a difference between ancient and modern swearing. Anciently, one would swear by God or swear by heaven when taking an oath. The Law of Moses forbade breaking the oath after it had been taken (Numbers 30:2). But in many situations, individuals would make an oath that was either blatantly

wicked or placed them in a terrible situation. One of the best examples is the story of Jephthah, a captain in the army of Israel, And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon unto mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering (Judges 11:30-31). Well as fate would have it, the first person through the door upon his victorious return was none other than his only daughter. Now he had bound himself with a vow to offer his daughter as a burnt offering. He could not break the vow he had taken, for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back (Judges 11:35). Jephthah sacrificed his daughter according to his ill-advised oath.

Furthermore, oaths and vows were used to ensure the secrecy of ancient secret combinations. The Jaredites formed a secret combination with a vow, they all sware unto him, by the God of heaven, and also by the heavens and also by the earth, and by their heads, that whoso should vary from the assistance which Akish desired should lose his head (Ether 8:14). For other examples of foolish or wicked oath taking, see Josh 9:3-21, 1 Sam 14, 2 Sam 12:5, Eccles 5:5, Acts 23:12-31, Matt 14:7, Alma 49:17, etc.

If we are to liken the scriptures unto ourselves, then the more applicable use of this scripture is to avoid swearing in the modern sense. Cursing shows a lack of self-control. It is disrespectful and destructive. Yet, like the ancient oath taking, its use is intended to give emphasis to one's speech. However, swearing doesn't make a man look serious, it makes him look uneducated. Hence, we are to communicate with a simple Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Matt 5:37).

Gordon B. Hinckley

"In our dialogues with others we must be an example of the believer. Conversation is the substance of friendly social activity. It can be happy. It can be light. It can be earnest. It can be funny. But it must not be salty, or uncouth, or foul if one is in sincerity a believer in Christ. . . .

"It is a tragic and unnecessary thing that boys and girls use foul language. It is inexcusable for a girl so to speak. It is likewise serious for the boy who holds the priesthood. This practice is totally unacceptable for one authorized to speak in the name of God. To blaspheme His holy name or to speak in language that is debauched is offensive to God and man.

"The man or the boy who must resort to such language immediately says that he is poverty-ridden in his vocabulary. He does not enjoy sufficient richness of expression to be able to speak effectively without swearing or using foul words." (*Ensign*, Nov. 1987, pp. 45, 47-48.)

Matt 5:39 **whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also**

George Q. Cannon

"To conquer by kindness is the greatest victory to be had. We should right all wrongs by kindness, and show those with whom we are associated that our love is broad enough to forgive them and that we have charity for their weaknesses. We ought to attain to this. We cannot go to God till we do." (*Collected Discourses 1886-1898*, ed. by Brian Stuy, vol. 2, George Q. Cannon, Feb. 1, 1891)

Gordon B. Hinckley

"There is much of another category of sickness among us. I speak of conflicts, quarrels, arguments which are a debilitating disease particularly afflicting families. If there be such problems in the homes of any within the sound of my voice, I encourage you to invite the healing power of Christ. To those to whom He spoke on the Mount, Jesus said:

'Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

'But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. ...

'And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.' (Matt. 5:38-41.)

"The application of this principle, difficult to live but wondrous in its curative powers, would have a miraculous effect on our troubled homes. It is selfishness which is the cause of most of our misery. It is as a cankering disease. The healing power of Christ, found in the doctrine of going the second mile, would do wonders to still argument and accusation, fault-finding and evil speaking." (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1988)

Matt 5:44 **Love your enemies**

Spencer W. Kimball

"Why does the Lord ask you to love your enemies and to return good for evil? That you might have the benefit of it. It does not injure the one you hate so much when you hate a person...but the hate and the bitterness canker your unforgiving heart." (*Faith Precedes The Miracle*, p. 191)

Ezra Taft Benson

"Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ liberated man from the world, by the pure gospel of love. He demonstrated that man, through a love of God, and through kindness and charity to his fellows, could achieve his highest potential...His charge to return good for evil is still the greatest challenge to the mind of man. At the same time it is man's greatest weapon." (*So Shall Ye Reap*, p. 6)

Howard W. Hunter

"Think what this admonition alone would do in your neighborhood and mine, in the communities in which you and your children live, in the nations which make up our great global family. I realize this doctrine poses a significant challenge, but surely it is a more agreeable challenge than the terrible tasks posed for us by the war and poverty and pain the world continues to face.

"How are we supposed to act when we are offended, misunderstood, unfairly or unkindly treated, or sinned against? What are we supposed to do if we are hurt by those we love, or are passed over for promotion, or are falsely accused, or have our motives unfairly assailed?

"Do we fight back? Do we send in an ever-larger battalion? Do we revert to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, or, as Tevye says in *Fiddler on the Roof*, do we come to the realization that this finally leaves us blind and toothless?" (*Conference Report*, Oct. 1992)

Gordon B. Hinckley

"It is not always easy to live by these doctrines when our very natures impel us to fight back...Most of us have not reached that stage of compassion and love and forgiveness. It is not easy. It requires a self-discipline almost greater than we are capable of. But as we try, we come to know that there is a resource of healing, that there is a mighty power of healing in Christ, and that if we are to be his true servants, we must not

only exercise that healing power in behalf of others, but, perhaps more important, inwardly.

"I would that the healing power of Christ might spread over the earth and be diffused through our society and into our homes, that it might cure men's hearts of the evil and adverse elements of greed and hate and conflict. I believe it could happen. I believe it must happen. If the lamb is to lie down with the lion, then peace must overcome conflict; healing must mend injury." (*Faith, The Essence of True Religion*, p. 35)

Matt 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect

First of all, we should notice the important difference between the Nephi version and the Matthew version. To the Nephites he declared that they should be perfect *even as I or your Father is perfect*. Although Jesus of Nazareth was the only sinless individual, when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount he had not yet been glorified and resurrected. For this reason, and for the sake of humility, he did not include himself as being perfect.

Whenever a discussion of perfection comes up, someone is always quick to point out that we cannot become perfect while in mortality. Yet, the Savior gives us a commandment that must somehow be fulfilled, for the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them (1 Ne 3:7). Is perfection attainable in mortality? The answer is a qualified "yes."

James E. Talmage said, "Our Lord's admonition to men to become perfect, even as the Father is perfect (Matt. 5:48) cannot rationally be construed otherwise than as implying the possibility of such achievement. Plainly, however, man cannot become perfect in mortality in the sense in which God is perfect as a supremely glorified Being. It is possible, though, for man to be perfect in his sphere in a sense analogous to that in which superior intelligences are perfect in their several spheres; yet the relative perfection of the lower is infinitely inferior to that of the higher." (*Jesus the Christ*, p. 232)

A careful reading of the scriptures demonstrates that three individuals are referred to as "perfect": Seth (DC 107:43), Noah (Gen 6:9), and Job (Job 1:1). To be perfect in this scriptural sense means to be complete, finished, or fully developed. Seth, Noah, and Job (and probably scores of other prophets) had become perfect in the scriptural sense. They had learned to serve God with a perfect heart and with a willing mind (1 Chron 28:9). They had submitted their

wills to the will of the Father. This was the quality the Savior wished for the Twelve, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be *made perfect* in one (Jn 17:22-23, italics added).

Yet, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). But in Christ the sinner is perfected, the debt is paid, and the dirty are made clean. This is why the Savior prayed that the Twelve would be *made perfect* in one. Through Christ, we attain "scriptural" perfection when our will is the same as the will of the Father. This can occur prior to the resurrection, for Joseph Smith spoke of certain angels who are the spirits of just men made perfect, they who are not resurrected, but inherit the same glory (DC 129:3). Our goal is to strive to perfect ourselves, carefully aligning our thoughts and desires with God's, that we may be made perfect in Christ and inherit the same glory.

Bruce R. McConkie

"Finite perfection may be gained by the righteous saints in this life. It consists in living a godfearing life of devotion to the truth, of walking in complete submission to the will of the Lord, and of putting first in one's life the things of the kingdom of God. *Infinite perfection* is reserved for those who overcome all things and inherit the fullness of the Father in the mansions hereafter. It consists in gaining eternal life, the kind of life which God has in the highest heaven within the celestial world." (*Mormon Doctrine*, p. 567)

Site Developed By [Ryan Constantine](#)

Source URL: <http://gospeldoctrine.com/content/matthew-5>