

# “KEEP THE ORDINANCES AS I DELIVERED THEM”

(1 COR 11-16)

Consider the following story:

At one time I worked for the railroad. I had responsibility for what is called deadend traffic – mail, baggage and express cars that are carried on passenger trains. I received one day in my office in Denver a telephone call from my counterpart in one of the eastern railroads. A train, he reported, had arrived in Newark, New Jersey, without its baggage car.

We began to check and learned that the car had been properly loaded and properly trained in Oakland and had been delivered by the Western Pacific in Salt Lake City to the Rio Grande. The D. and R.G. had carried it to Denver and delivered it to the Missouri Pacific, which had carried it to St. Louis for delivery to the Baltimore and Ohio. But a thoughtless switchman in the St. Louis yard, careless of his instruction, had moved a small piece of steel, a switch point, about three inches, with the result that a car that should have been in Newark, New Jersey, was in New Orleans.

On such seemingly small hinges turn our lives. Our lives are, in reality, the sum total of our seemingly unimportant decisions and of our capacity to live by those decisions. (Elder Gordon B. Hinckley, *BYU Speeches of the Year*, Oct. 26, 1965, p. 3)

2 Nephi 26:22 speaks of Satan leading us by the neck with a “flaxen cord” until he binds us with his strong cords forever. 2 Nephi 28:21 warns us that Satan will cheat our souls and lead us “carefully down to hell.” Alma 47:18 tells a story that warns us that we can be “poisoned] by degrees.” All of these examples, with the story of the switch point, warn us that we must be careful of even the smallest changes in our spiritual direction. The great changes are not changes in destination, but changes in direction. And they may not be radical changes. A few degrees of diversion from the right path can, over time, cause us to miss our destination by hundreds of miles. As

Paul speaks of the relationship of husbands and wives and the Lord; as he speaks of the significance of the sacrament; as he gives instruction in the matter of spiritual gifts; and as he teaches of the resurrection, he is warning us to conduct our lives strictly by the doctrines of the gospel, and to receive the ordinances of the gospel as well.

## **I. HUSBANDS' AND WIVES' RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE LORD (1 Corinthians 11:1-3, 11-12)**

What are the three relationships referred to in 1 Cor. 1:3? The message here is clear enough. The woman is to be subject to her husband in the same way that Christ is subject to God. Look at John 5:20; 8:29; 17:21,22. What do these verses tell us about the relationship between the Father and the Son? In the light of 1 Corinthians 1:3, what do they teach us about the way in which the marriage relationship should be conducted.

What principles of that divine relationship should be applied to our own marriages? Look at 1 Cor. 1:11,12. What does Paul tell us about the marriage relationship? (See 1 Peter 3:7 as well)

What switch points might have caused Paul to teach such doctrine to the Corinthian Saints? Some men must have been reluctant or unwilling to fulfill their priesthood responsibilities in the home and in the congregations. Some women must have challenged the authority of the priesthood, as has happened in our own day.

We must not neglect to see the following message in these verses: *the wife's support of her husband is her responsibility and affair; not her husband's. This is a covenant relationship and only works in an environment of agency and love.*

You cannot imagine the Father yelling at the Son and *demanding* obedience and respect because he is, after all, the Father. You cannot believe that the Father would belittle or ridicule the Son over some small mistake. *"That is a terrible place for a forest!"* The power of this holy relationship is found in the fact that the Son chooses to respect and obey his Father because of his absolute trust in his Father's righteousness. And it must be on this basis alone that the wife submits to the husband. Thus we see again that "no

power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood . . .” (D&C 121:41)

Elder Marion G. Romney said of this matter”

With the Lord, the man is not without the woman, nor is the woman without the man.

Husbands and wives should never forget these basic truths. They should remember their relationship and the purpose of it.

They should be one in harmony, respect, and mutual consideration. Neither should plan or follow an independent course of action. They should consult, pray, and decide together.

In the management of their homes and families, husbands and wives should counsel with each other in kindness, love, patience, and understanding . . . .

Remember that neither the wife nor the husband is the slave of the other. Husbands and wives are equal partners, particularly Latter-day Saint husbands and wives. They should so consider themselves and so treat each other in this life, and then they will do so throughout eternity. . . .

The woman is not inferior to the man. It is true, of course, that the man holds the priesthood and in the righteous exercise thereof presides in the home. This he is to do, however, in the spirit with which Christ presides over His church. ("In the Image of God," Ensign, March, 1978: pp.2,4)

## **II. THE PURPOSE OF THE SACRAMENT (1 Corinthians 11: 17-29)**

Note the JST change to 1 Cor. 11:20: “When ye come together into one place, is it not to eat the Lord's supper?” This suggests that the major purpose of our gathering in Sacrament meetings is to partake of the Sacrament. These verses suggest three great purposes for the Sacrament.

- The first is in 11:25—“This do ye . . . in remembrance of me.” The Sacrament is a *MEMORIAL*.”
- The second is in 11:26. When we partake, we “shew the Lord’s death till he come.” The Sacrament is a *TESTIMONIAL*.” (See the footnote for the word *shew*. It means to *proclaim or announce*.)
- The third is in 11:28-30. “But let a man examine himself . . .” The Sacrament is an *EXAMINATION*.

Think about your experience with the Sacrament last Sunday. Did you fulfill these three main purposes? Did you rejoice in your recollection of the wonder and majesty of the atonement? Did your partaking, together with your life and example in the days since, testify of your faith in the Redeemer? Did you look closely at your life to see if you were worthy and if you were conducting yourself as a disciple ought?

What switchpoints with regard to the sacrament seem to have caused the Corinthian saints to be headed toward the wrong destination? Consider the meaning of the following words in this context: *divisions* (11:18); *heresies* (11:19); *hungry, drunken* (11:21); *unworthily, damnation* (11:29).

Perhaps a note is appropriate here about partaking worthily of these emblems. This must be one of the purposes of the examination suggested by Paul.

If any of the members are not in good standing; if they have in their hearts any feeling of hatred, envy, or sin of any kind, they should not partake of these emblems. If there are any differences or feelings existing between brethren, these differences should be adjusted before the guilty parties partake; otherwise they will eat and drink unworthily and bring upon them the condemnation spoken of by Paul. (Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol.2, p.343)

The Spirit will not come to a man unless and until he is prepared by personal righteousness to have the companionship of that member of the Godhead. Thus to be worthy of baptism men

must "witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins" (D. & C. 20:37), and precisely the same thing is involved in their preparation to partake worthily of the sacrament. In other words, as a result of worthy baptism men stand clean before him if they fulfil the full law involved in partaking of the sacrament, for in each instance they are rewarded with the companionship of the Spirit, which companionship they cannot have unless they are cleansed and purified from sin. (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, p.297)

The Lord has said that we should not permit anyone to partake of the sacrament unworthily. This means, as I understand it, anyone in the Church who has been in transgression of some kind and who has not repented. It would also apply to the apostate. (Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Doctrines of Salvation*, Vol.2, p.350)

A beautiful story from the New Era suggests an proper attitude for those who bless and pass—who *administer* the sacrament. It is probably true that at no other time will young men stand more clearly and significantly in the place of the Savior than as they prepare and present the bread and water to his followers in his name and in remembrance of him.

I had an experience in the mission field [when I was a branch president] that is very memorable to me. A man came to me after Church - he was twice my age, a very unhappy person - and told me that he had committed a grave sin before he joined the church, that his wife would not forgive him, would not divorce him, and constantly reminded him of his good-for-nothingness. He said, "I've come to think of myself at her estimate. How can I be whole again and pure of heart, clean in my thoughts?" I said, "What have you tried to do for this problem?" He said, "I've fought it, I've fought it." I'd had a class in psychology before i went on a mission, and I told him there must be a better way than to fight sin. We knelt in prayer together, and afterwards I gave him a book to read - *As a Man Thinketh in His Heart, So Is He* - and then I put my arm around him (he was shorter than I),

gave him a firm handclasp, and told him that he could overcome his problem. And then by inspiration or coincidence, I said to him, "How would you like to prepare the Lord's supper for Sunday School?" (He was a teacher in the Aaronic Priesthood.)

He said, "Do you think I'm worthy to do this?"

I said, "No, I don't think any of us really are. But I think Jesus would be pleased if you would render Him this service."

And so he proceeded to set the Lord's table each Sunday morning. After about six weeks I met him coming up the aisle before Sunday School. I put out my hand to reassure him. He put his hand behind his back and said nothing. I said, "Have I offended you?" He said, "Oh, no. I've just washed my hands with soap and hot water, and I can't shake hands with you or any man until I've set the Lord's table." That's the most beautiful reverence I've seen in that simple act of setting the Lord's table. (Lowell L. Bennion *The New Era*, Nov. 1972 p.16)

### **III. THE IMPORTANCE OF ALL SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12-14)**

In I Cor. 12:7,11, and in D&C 46:11, we learn that every man or woman who has received the Holy Ghost has received a spiritual gift. Verses 11-30 teach that all those gifts are important and necessary for the church to function effectively, even as the foot, the hand, and the ear are all necessary for the body to function effectively. In 1 Cor. 14, verses 3,4,5,12 & 26, Paul repeats a word that suggests why these gifts are important. What is the word? Compare that word to D&C 46:8,12, & 29, where other words express a similar concept.

I Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1, together with D&C 46:8 tell us that is appropriate to desire and to seek spiritual gifts, if we do it for the right reasons.

Which is the greatest of the spiritual gifts? (See 1 Cor. 13) Reflect on the qualities of charity mentioned in 1 Cor. 13:4-8. My belief is that two of the best examples of charity in the scriptures, other than the Son of God, are

Hyrum Smith and Jonathan, the son of Saul and friend of David. Why does Paul say that charity is greater than any of the other gifts? What is the process for obtaining charity according to Moroni 7:48?

Read the following story about charity and ask yourself some hard questions. Does your love for your fellow-men, even for those who hate you and spitefully use you (see Matt. 5:44), meet this standard?

Then a few years ago, at the closing of a conference of the St. Johns Stake, we had had a wonderful conference I thought, and I was very happy on retiring. I was sleeping in the home of the president of the stake, Brother Levi Udall, and that night I had a remarkable dream. I have seldom mentioned this to other people, but I do not know why I should not. It seems to me appropriate in talking along this line. I dreamed that I and a group of my own associates found ourselves in a courtyard where, around the outer edge of it, were German soldiers--and . . . Adolph Hitler was there with his group, and they seemed to be sharpening their swords and cleaning their guns, and making preparations for a slaughter of some kind, or an execution. We knew not what, but, evidently we were the objects. But presently a circle was formed and [Hitler] and his men were all within the circle, and my group and I were circled on the outside, and he was sitting on the inside of the circle with his back to the outside, and when we walked around and I got directly opposite to him, I stepped inside the circle and walked across to where he was sitting, and spoke to him in a manner something like this:

"I am your brother. You are my brother. In our heavenly home we lived together in love and peace. Why can we not so live here on the earth?"

And it seemed to me that I felt in myself, welling up in my soul, a love for that man, and I could feel that he was having the same experience, and presently he arose, and we embraced each other and kissed each other, a kiss of affection.

Then the scene changed so that our group was within the circle,

and he and his group were on the outside, and when he came around to where I was standing, he stepped inside the circle and embraced me again, with a kiss of affection.

I think the Lord gave me that dream. Why should I dream of this man, one of the greatest enemies of mankind, and one of the wickedest, but that the Lord should teach me that I must love my enemies, and I must love the wicked as well as the good?  
(George F. Richards, Conference Report, October 1946, p.140)

The gift of charity, or the lack of that gift, or our desire to earn that gift, might be switchpoints in our lives.

1 Corinthians, D&C 46, and Moroni 10 all give lists of gifts of the spirit, but those lists are not comprehensive: Elder McConkie taught:

*These gifts are infinite in number and endless in their manifestations because God himself is infinite and endless, and because the needs of those who receive them are as numerous, varied, and different as there are people in the kingdom. All saints are commanded to seek earnestly the best gifts. Chief among them are the testimony of Jesus, a believing spirit, divine wisdom, heavenly knowledge, faith in the Lord, the working of miracles, prophecy, the beholding of angels and ministering spirits, the discerning of spirits, tongues and their interpretations, the gift of preaching, administrative ability, and the insight to discern and recognize all of the gifts of God, lest there be confusion or deception in the Church. (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p.270 - p.271, *emphasis added*)*

What dangers are suggested in these chapters with regard to spiritual gifts? Where are the switchpoints of which we must be aware? The Corinthian saints seemed to prefer the gift of tongues over other gifts (see 1 Cor. 14). They felt that speaking in tongues was a manifestation of their own innate righteousness. Paul made clear to them that unless this gift edified those who heard it, it was not of much value.



Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. (1 Cor.14:19)

Another implied concern is the preference for ones own gift above the gifts of others. This attitude probably caused Paul to use the analogy comparing these gifts to the different parts of the body.

In D&C 46, the Lord warns about the possibility of being “seduced by evil spirits.” (D&C 46:7) I have known people whose perception of their own spiritual worth was linked inextricably to gifts they believed to be of the Spirit, gifts that did not seem to edify others or benefit anyone but themselves. We must be careful not to judge improperly in this matter. The Lord warned, “That which the Spirit testifies to you, even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart.” (D&C 46:7) He also warned in the same verse that we should walk uprightly and do all things with prayer and thanksgiving.

We should seek earnestly the best gifts (see D&C 46:8). But we must not ask for the manifestations of these gifts “for a sign, that we may consume it upon [our] lusts. (D&C 46:9)

### **III. THE RESURRECTION AND THE DEGREES OF GLORY (1 Cor 15)**

Some of the Corinthian saints had begun to dispute the reality of the Resurrection (See 1 Cor. 15:12). It is hard to imagine this mistake as being insignificant. The magnitude of this doctrinal error is made clear by Paul’s testimony that without the resurrection “our preaching is vain” (15:14); “we are found false witnesses of God” (15:15); “your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (15:17).

Does it not appear to you that this would be a doctrine Satan would like to eradicate? Would not that eternally bodiless being delight in confounding, confusing, and destroying faith in the reality of a physical, corporeal resurrection? And he has done a pretty good job of it. How many Christians throughout the world can you think of that continue to preach of and believe in a literal, physical resurrection?

Paul presents powerful witnesses of the resurrection in this chapter of testimony. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Paul cites over 500 witnesses of this event. In America, another 2500 saw and touched the wounds of crucifixion and bore witness. (3 Nephi 17:25) Paul also uses the fall to explain the need for a resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:19-23) He cites baptism for the dead as an evidence of the resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:29) the resurrection is one of the most carefully attested events in the history of the world!

I believe that the major purpose of the marks of the crucifixion that remain the body of Christ is to bear witness of his death and subsequent resurrection.

I love Paul's eloquence in 1 Cor 15:32.

If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for to morrow we die.

Finally Paul explains that not all resurrected bodies are the same. (See 1 Cor. 15:39-42) There will be a difference in the glories and capacities of resurrected bodies.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In 1 Cor. 16:13, Paul suggests that we not allow ourselves even the tiniest divergence from the path (the track) laid out before us. I have at times envisioned the strait and narrow path as a strait and narrow hallway. Far away, in a blaze of incandescent light stands a being of incomprehensible glory before an open door (see Revelation 3:7,8). But all along the hall are other doors, designed with Satanic ingenuity to draw us aside. David's door had Bathsheba's picture on it. Absalom's door had a crown. The rich young ruler entered a door to a room full of wealth. The prodigal son found a portal marked "Freedom." Cain found the door to his brother's flocks. The image is instructive. We know that we must endure to the end, but Satan knows that as well. He reaches out to us with his flaxen cords, with his mild poisons, and he leads us away from the open door and "carefully down to hell." We must not allow ourselves to be misled at the switch points. Our destination is eternal lives and the everlasting presence of God, and

nowhere else.

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