

Come Follow Me Insights (Doctrine and Covenants sections 18-19, Feb. 22-28)

I'm Taylor.

And I'm Tyler.

This is Book of Mormon Central's Come Follow Me Insights. Today: Doctrine and Covenants sections 18 and 19.

These are two loaded sections, both of them. As far as a quick overview of section 18, you're going to have Oliver Cowdery, who comes to Joseph Smith, along with David Whitmer, with some questions as to how they can help build up the Church that hasn't been restored yet, and what is it that God wants us to do at this phase. We're nearing completion of the translation process of the Book of Mormon at the Whitmer farm in Fayette, New York. And Joseph receives the following revelation for them, and in here, you're going to notice how the Savior speaks to this group. So, for instance, in verses 1 through 8, he's going to be addressing Oliver, just Oliver. And then in verses 9 through 30, he's going to be addressing Oliver, as well as David, so it's as if he's now pulling David into the conversation with some specific instructions. And the fascinating assignment that Jesus is going to give to both David and Oliver is to select twelve men to be ordained as apostles, and compose this original Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in our dispensation.

Notice the significance that it's been hundreds of years since Jesus called Peter, James, John, Andrew, Phillip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, all on down the line to those original twelve apostles, back in the New Testament. Now, the Savior, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, is giving that same commission: let's call a quorum of twelve apostles again, and that assignment is given to David and Oliver here. Later on, Martin is going to join them. The Three Witnesses become witnesses, not just of the Book of Mormon, and the plates, and the truthfulness of the scripture, but those three are going to be the ones whereby we call all twelve of our first Apostles in this dispensation.

Then you'll notice, in verses 31 through 36 of this section, he gives this instruction directly to the twelve Apostles that aren't going to be called, incidentally, for another six years down the road. That's how long it's going to take for the Three Witnesses to call the twelve Apostles, but we have some instructions in place for the twelve back here in section 18. And then he finishes up 37 through 42 speaking again to David and Oliver for the remaining part of the section.

Now, notice what happens here early on in verses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Keep in mind, we're finalizing the translation process. We're down to the last segments of the translation process. Look what the Savior teaches Oliver Cowdery directly about this work that he has had such a vital role in being the chief scribe for what we have as the Book of Mormon today.

Look at verse 2: "Behold, I have manifested unto you, by my Spirit in many instances, that the things which you have written are true; wherefore you know that they are true." I love this, that

the Savior's speaking to him, saying, I've given you so many witnesses to know that these are true. And so he's strengthening Oliver's testimony, and his confidence to move forward. Why? Look at verse 3: "And if you know that they are true, behold, I give unto you a commandment, that you rely upon the things which are written....". In other words, Oliver, the Book of Mormon isn't just a nice quote book. The Book of Mormon is the handbook for the dispensation of the fullness of times. In it, you will find the gospel of repentance, and baptism, and how to increase people's faith. In it, you will find the keys for how you're going to gather Israel in the last days, and build up the kingdom of God on the earth for the final time. In that book, you're going to find the keys for how to organize and set up and run the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ. It's all contained in this incredible revelation that has come to you, that you've scribed, through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Notice verse 4: "For in them are all things written concerning the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my rock." That's a pretty profound promise, and you're going to notice that some people in that early Church don't pay enough attention to, or give enough heed to, the Book of Mormon. So, in a section down the road many months, we're going to cover a time when the Lord actually tells them they've brought the Church under condemnation because they're not paying enough attention to the Book of Mormon and following the guidelines that have been given.

Notice verse 5: "Wherefore, if you shall build up my church, upon the foundation of my gospel and my rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you." I love that promise, to set the stage. Now, keep in mind, the longer you work with somebody closely, the more you get to know their personality, you get to know their strengths and their weaknesses, their gifts and their struggles. Oliver Cowdery's been working with Joseph Smith now for three months. That's roughly the span of time to translate and scribe the 531 English pages of the Book of Mormon that we have today. Oliver has apparently started to wonder, why was Joseph given this assignment, and not me, or somebody else who maybe is a little bit more learned?

Look at verse 8: "And now, marvel not that I have called him unto mine own purpose, which purpose is known in me; wherefore, if he shall be diligent in keeping my commandments he shall be blessed unto eternal life; and his name is Joseph." I love that. I love the fact that the Lord is speaking, reasoning with Oliver, who has had these concerns thinking, Joseph, you might not have the best grammar, or the best spelling, or he might not have the greatest of educations in 1829 frontier New York and Pennsylvania. But the Lord's saying to Oliver, I chose him for purposes that are known to me, and that's all that matters. So then, it's your choice, Oliver, and by extension, you and me, to either trust that God has done that, and have faith in Christ by following the prophets that he chooses, or feel like we're smarter than the prophets that God has chosen.

Brothers and sisters, the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, they are filled with stories of people who thought they were smarter than or knew more than the prophets

of God at their times, and those scripture stories never end well for those people. There's something profound when we're getting ready to set up this church. There's something profound about getting scripture in place, and getting priesthood authority, and those callings of God, and from God, in place to these people, these special witnesses that God has chosen, and then the Church can come forth, built upon the foundation of the rock of his, and his gospel to then go forth into all of the world and gather the elect out of the four corners of the earth.

Now, notice how quickly God shifts Oliver's focus away from Joseph Smith as the called prophet, and Oliver as his scribe and his, basically, his first counselor in so many things up to this point. Notice where he shifts his focus in verse 10: "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;". Why is he doing that? Look back at verse 9, because Jesus, speaking directly to him, says: "...now, Oliver Cowdery, I speak unto you, and also unto David Whitmer, by the way of commandment; for, behold, I command all men everywhere to repent, and I speak unto you, even as unto Paul mine apostle, for you are called even with that same calling with which he was called", this apostolic calling. What does the word "apostle" mean, anyway? Before we move forward, that would be a term we really need to define.

So, the word "apostle" is actually related to another word that you might know, that we find in the New Testament as "epistle". An epistle is a letter, or something that's sent. So, in the Greek, it's "apostellein". It means somebody who is sent out, sent forth. But, as an ordained priesthood office, this is an ancient office where that individual is called for their lifetime to declare the glad tidings of the gospel, the good news, the rock of Jesus Christ to all the world, whereas each of us individually may be called just to serve those within our immediate influence, our neighborhood, our family, and our friends. A beautiful word: those who are sent forth, and all of us might aspire to be sent by God to serve those around us. It's very simple. Just ask yourself, what is the Spirit inspiring me to do today, to go forth and bless the lives of somebody within my realm of influence?

So why are David, and Oliver, and the Twelve Apostles, why are they sent forth? I think the answer, again back to verse 10: "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men," that's a hundred percent, "...that all men might repent and come unto him" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:10-11). That's an interesting flow of thoughts there, that Jesus "...suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:11). You might say, so that, or in order that, "all men might repent and come unto him" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:11).

What is it about Jesus suffering for us that then opens the door for us to be able to "repent and come unto him" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:11)? Some of you may look at that and see, at the surface level, a logical disconnect to say, why do I need Jesus to suffer in order for me to repent? Brothers and sisters, this gets at one of the deepest theological doctrines for us, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, to begin to think about and to explore.

We know from the Book of Mormon, from 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi chapter 9, where Jacob, the brother of Nephi, is giving a speech to the people of Nephi. He tells us, there in 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 9 verses 7 and 8, what would have happened to us if an infinite Atonement had not been performed for us, or completed for us, if that infinite price hadn't been paid in full. He tells us that our body would “rot and [crumble] to [mother earth], to rise no more”, and he tells us that “our spirits [would have] become subject [unto the devil, we would have been angels to the devil, to live with him in hell forever], to rise no more” (2 Nephi 9:7-8). It's interesting, the prophet Jacob used those four words, “to rise no more”, to refer to what would happen to our physical, as well as our spiritual, nature, if we don't have an infinite Atonement in place (2 Nephi 9:7-8).

I have suffered these things for all, “...that all men might repent...” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:11). In other words, Jesus paid a price to eternal justice that you and I couldn't pay, and by so paying it, he's now opened the door for real change, for real capacity to improve, and move forward towards God, and progress towards the promises that he has given us for eternal blessings in heaven. Because he suffered all of our pain, now we have the door open to actually change. We're not stuck in the grave, or in hell, forever, as Jacob referred to it: “[that] awful monster, death and hell...” (2 Nephi 9:26). It's really this two-headed monster from 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 9 that Jesus has overcome, giving us now the option to repent.

Notice how he takes this further. Look at verse 12: “And he hath risen again from the dead, that,” in other words, you could put in the word “so” again, “[so] that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth! Wherefore, you are called to cry repentance unto this people” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:12-14). That's your mission as an Apostle, as this one who is sent by God. What do you do when you're sent? In this context, you cry repentance, you help people understand the price that's been paid for their soul, and help encourage, invite, motivate, persuade them to change their life, and to walk the path that the Savior has outlined for them.

And then you get the famous verse 15 and 16: “And if it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!” And then he goes on, in verse 16, to talk about if you bring many souls, “how great will be your joy” with them.

This entire section of scripture, the Lord is contrasting for us the eternal with the mortal. And he's saying, look, if you spend your entire mortal life crying repentance, doing everything you can to try to encourage, and invite, and persuade people to repent, and you only get one of them to repent, “how great shall be your joy with [that one soul] in the kingdom of my Father!” (Doctrine and Covenants 18:15). And if you bring many, even more. It's that idea of getting us to break out of the mortal blinders that we inherently have as human beings. The natural man/natural woman instincts are to focus on me, here, now, and we don't see the pre-mortal very clearly, and we don't see the post-mortal, the eternal aspects of our existence very clearly. We're

pretty bound by these mortal blinders, and he's helping us to see that there's nothing this world has to offer you that can compare with what God has to offer you.

And let's remind ourselves, this word, “repent”, sometimes conjures up feelings of fear, or dread, or worry, and really all that God is asking us to do is to trust in him that we can change, that we can improve, that we can grow. Now, who among us doesn't want to improve our lives, and grow in some ways, or change? So, whenever you see this word, “repentance”, just know all God is asking is for you to change, to trust that he can help you to change to be who you should be, that you can improve, you can grow. So, whenever you see the word “repent”, you might put those words in place of the word “repentance” as perhaps a more inviting way to see what God is inviting us to do.

Now, you'll notice the summation of all of these commands to David and Oliver. Look at verse 22: "And as many as repent and are baptized in my name, which is Jesus Christ, and endure to the end, the same shall be saved." He's bringing this down to language that everybody can understand. This is not rocket science; this is not reserved for the richest of the rich, or the most educated of the most educated. This is available to all of our Heavenly Parents' children who live on this earth, that we have faith in Christ, we repent of our sins, we get baptized in his name and endure to the end, and he promises he'll save us. "Behold, Jesus Christ is the name which is given of the Father, and there is none other name given whereby man can be saved;" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:23).

And yet you look in our world today, you look on the Internet. There are so many people setting up their name, or their causes, or their brand, or their movement, as the thing that will bring you the greatest lasting happiness, or pleasure, or joy, whatever people are seeking for, and here it just keeps coming back to the basic, simple truth: there's only one name whereby salvation comes, and it's the name of Jesus Christ. That's it. It's a short list.

And so, what are these Apostles supposed to do? Verse 24: "Wherefore, all men must take upon them the name which is given of the Father, for in that name shall they be called at the last day; [and] if they know not the name by which they are called, they cannot have place in the kingdom of my Father" (Doctrine and Covenants 18:24-25). That's profound, that we, as children of God, are then invited to become children of Christ. When you are born into a new family, or into your family, you take upon you the family name. My dad's name was Dennis Griffin. When I was born, I became a Griffin. I took upon me the name of my father. And in this case, these Apostles are going to go around preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and inviting people to be born again to come into the family of Christ, to be adopted by him so we become his sons and his daughters, and by so doing, his name is taken upon them, and it's beautiful.

Now the twelve, in verse 27, he says “[these] Twelve shall be my disciples, and they shall take upon them my name; and the Twelve are they who shall desire to take upon them my name with full purpose of heart." There's the first qualifier, this desire. Now, notice he takes them with some very specific instructions regarding the Twelve, in verses 31 through 36, where he's

addressing them directly. It's kind of unique, especially knowing that the Twelve, that the quorum isn't going to be officially called by the Three Witnesses for another six years after this point.

Now jump down to verse 36, this closing verse of the instruction given directly to the Twelve: "Wherefore, you can testify that you have heard my voice, and know my words." Why? Look at verse 34: "These words are not of men nor of man, but of me; wherefore, you shall testify they are of me and not of man;". It's profound when you read the Doctrine and Covenants and hear so clearly, so forcefully, and yet so gently, the voice of Jesus Christ speaking to these early Church leaders and the people surrounding them, and building up the kingdom of God on the earth for the last time. It's so refreshing to hear the crystal call of the Savior's voice to us in the latter days.

Now, let's jump over to section 19 and set the stage. This is a very, very pivotal section in all of our canon of scripture. Why? Well, for a variety of reasons, one of them being that this is a pivotal time in the Restoration of the gospel, because what you have going on historically is Martin Harris is the only, and I mean the only, friend that Joseph Smith has who has any means to assist in bringing forth the work financially. Joseph's other friends are, in many cases, just as poor as he is. They're struggling to eke out a living on the land, with all of this additional burden of time requirements to translate the book, and to keep receiving these revelations, and to deal with all the questions, and concerns, and people coming. It's a tough schedule to have if you're a poor farmer in the 1829 –1830 timeframe.

And so Martin Harris, his only, what you might call wealthy friend, has agreed to help bring forth the publication of the Book of Mormon. So, they went to E. B. Grandin. He's a printer there in Palmyra, and initially, he refused to print the book. There's way too much bias against the Smiths, against Joseph, against this translation project, and he's not going to touch it. So, they go to another city nearby in New York, and they find a printer who actually agrees to print the book. But they realize this is going to be troublesome to have to keep shuttling the printer's manuscripts much further away, and to keep tabs on the printing process. So, they come back to E. D. Grandin one more time and say, hey, we've got a printer who's going to do this: one of your competitors in a neighboring town. Are you sure you aren't willing to do it? And he says, I'll tell you what. If you will pay \$3000 up front, if you pay that \$3000, I'll agree to print and publish these 5,000 copies of the book. What was \$3000 back then today?

Our best estimates that \$3000 in Joseph Smith's day would be worth about \$85,000 in 2021. Now that's a significant sum of money. I have a lot of friends. I don't know if I could just go to any of my friends today and say, could you hand over \$85,000? Because I have a book that I'd like to get published. I've published a bunch of books, and I've spent a lot of years reading books. Most authors would be thrilled to have 5000 books published. Very few actually get to that amount. So, this is an incredible sum of money that we're talking about here, and Martin Harris was willing to give up one of the most prosperous farms in the entire region, his own, to put up a surety so that the money would be available to print the most significant book the world has ever

seen. Martin Harris is one of the most important, pivotal characters in the early Restoration, and God bless Martin Harris for his humility. Sometimes he had to be reminded to be humble, and that's the point of this section, where God is trying to lay out for Martin, sure it might seem like a lot of money to you, Martin. But let me tell you, Jesus is saying, what I have given away to bring goodness and light to the world, and so it's not a lot I'm asking of you, Martin. And so all of us might ask ourselves, how much has the Lord really asked of me? What am I really willing to put on the altar of sacrifice, that I might bless the lives of those around me and bring forth God's kingdom?

So again, we might say that's a lot of money, but in the eternal scheme of things, that's nothing. When God asks of us some sacrifice, for that day, it may seem like a lot, but in the eternal scheme of things, how much has God really asked of us? And that's what we're going to explore here.

So, put this in context: Joseph Smith has asked Martin to help him with this, Martin agreed to it. Now we're in August of 1829, and E. B. Grandin is demanding a guarantee of the \$3000, in order to print those 5,000 first-edition copies of the Book of Mormon, and Martin is struggling. You can imagine that his wife, Lucy, isn't excited about him mortgaging enough of their farm to be able to get \$3000 to pay for this printing. So, he asks Joseph for more clarity than what he had already received in section 5, even though Joseph told him, you've already got a revelation. And section 19 is now given in response to Martin's hesitancy to pay this \$3000 bill.

Notice that in section 19, this is what makes it so unique among our scriptures, is it's the first time, post-resurrection, where Jesus Christ himself opens up and shares some of the intricacies of what went on during that infinite Atoning sacrifice that he performed for us. This gives us a glimpse into that aspect of the Atonement that you don't get anywhere else in scripture. This is the first time where he's actually opening up and giving us some detail. Notice how he starts: "I am Alpha and Omega..." (Doctrine and Covenants 19:1). It's the beginning of the Greek alphabet, and the end of the Greek alphabet. I am the beginning and the end. "...Christ the Lord; yea, even I am he, the beginning and the end, the Redeemer of the world" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:1).

Now, here's the beautiful concept to keep in mind. You're going to get Jesus talking about the things that he endured, the things that he did, and we're going to get that contrasted, in this section, with what Martin Harris is being asked to do. Now just for starters, you'll notice that Jesus made a covenant. He made an agreement to do all of the things that we're going to be talking about before the foundation of the world. Martin Harris has made an agreement that he's going to do these things that we're talking about here, financing the Book of Mormon along with other things, and it's not going to be pleasant. It's not going to be convenient. It's going to cost him a lot more than the money. Martin Harris is going to give more than \$3000 in the process. He's going to lose ultimately his marriage, he's going to lose his prestige, his political clout in the area, he's going to lose a lot of things, and we're going to talk about that a little bit later.

Look at verse, let's go to verse 4: "...surely every man must repent or suffer, for I, God, am endless." And then he goes into this little description. It's as if Jesus is saying to Martin here, "Come now... let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18). It's that language from Isaiah where he's saying, let me reason with you. Let me explain some things to you in really clear terms so that you understand what we're talking about.

Verse 6: "...it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment, but it is written endless torment. Again, it is written eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:7). So, you get these two words, "endless" and "eternal", and he's going to now teach Martin Harris and us, by default here, what he means when he says things like 'endless punishment', "endless torment", or 'eternal punishment' (Doctrine and Covenants 19:7).

So, look at verse 10: "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" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:10-13). Let me see if I can show you this from a different angle. We refer to the Savior's suffering as the infinite Atonement. Other synonyms for "infinite" would be "endless" and "eternal". You can't measure them; they're without end, and it's this eternal suffering.

So, notice that infinity can be measured in breadth, or in time, and it can also be measured in depth, and in quality of -- instead of quantity, it can be quality. It can be the profundity and the depth of suffering. So, Jesus in a finite period of time, beginning in Gethsemane, through the trials, and on to Golgotha, on Calvary's cross, through that finite period of time, Jesus suffered an infinite Atonement. It doesn't mean that Jesus is still suffering in heaven today, and will continue to suffer forever. That's not what he means by infinite Atonement in length of time. He means an infinite amount of suffering was endured in a finite period of time. But here's the amazing thing: because of his power as a God in the flesh, suffering this infinite amount of pain for all of us, the power of his infinite Atonement to bless lives is infinite in its scope into the future, as well as into the past, so it does transcend time, not in its suffering, but in its capacity to save.

Now, here he is, teaching Martin Harris about eternal, and endless, and infinite things, and here's Martin living in finite time, maybe struggling a little bit, like all of us would, to one degree or another with mortal blinders, seeing only this life, seeing a prosperous farm, hearing a wife saying, don't you dare mortgage any of our farm for that man and that book. But Martin has received some answers directly from God that he knows that this is true.

Look at verse 15: "Therefore I command you to repent -- repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore -- how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not." We get three repeats there, "you know not", in verse 15.

Brothers and sisters, when you and I repent, there is a degree of suffering associated with that repentance. It hurts. The natural man and natural woman inside of us, they don't let go easily when we're trying to change and turn to God. It hurts. There's pain associated with that, but it's good pain, and it's progressing us along the path, that suffering to whatever degree we have to experience it. You'll notice here, he just told Martin, "you know not", and then he repeated it three times (Doctrine and Covenants 19:15). You have no idea, Martin, how bad this pain can be. And he starts to describe just a little, he gives us a little inkling, a little taste, of what it was that he went through and endured for each of us.

Verse 16: "For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;" . Again, he's saying, I don't want you to experience these things. So, there's an aspect of the Savior's Atonement that he is lumping into this little two-word phrase: "these things" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:16). I've suffered these things for all so you don't have to suffer, just repent. Notice verse 17: "But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;" . And now his description: "Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit -- and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink --". (Doctrine and Covenants 19:18)

This is sacred ground that we're treading on. And, incidentally, you could cross reference Doctrine and Covenants section 19 verses 18 with Luke chapter 22 verses 43 through 44, because when we're getting those four New Testament accounts of the Savior's infinite Atonement, it's fascinating to look at the unique testimonies that come from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Luke being a physician, a doctor, if you will, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. He's the one who focuses a lot on healing, and on suffering, and it's Luke, the only one of those four gospel writers there in chapter 22 verse 43 and 44 that describes the infinite agony Jesus is enduring while in Gethsemane, not just on the cross where he, it says, "...his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling... to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

There are a lot of scholars in the biblical studies realm who look at that verse, those two verses actually, 43 and 44, and say they were added later on by later Christians, who are pushing back against an early heretic notion called Docetism, where you have early Christians saying Jesus didn't actually have a physical body. He didn't actually experience mortality the way you and I experience mortality, it just looked like he did, and that's called Docetism. And so a lot of biblical scholars will say, oh, people later on added that to Luke's gospel, to push back against the Docetists to say, no, he had a body, see, "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling... to the ground" (Luke 22:44). But many people in the Christian world today don't even think those two verses are valid.

I love the fact that with Restoration scripture, we can inform our understanding of some of these issues that are serious debates and serious questions in the biblical studies realm. And this is one of those places where, in Doctrine and Covenants section 19, Jesus himself telling Martin Harris that he "[bled] at every pore, and... [suffered] both body and spirit..." (Doctrine and Covenants

19:18). And you get that as well in the Book of Mormon, where it describes him bleeding from every pore in King Benjamin's speech. So, it's triangulated, those two verses in 22, and why do we care? What difference does it make?

Brothers and sisters, this is sacred ground, when Jesus himself is telling you about his suffering that he endured for us, and then he uses words saying that he “[trembled] because of pain, and [bled from] every pore...” and the suffering was “both body and spirit”, and he was pleading with God to take it away because he didn't want to “[partake of] the bitter cup, and shrink--” (Doctrine and Covenants 19:18).

Notice that he describes his infinite suffering, and then the next word in verse 19 is “nevertheless”, which means put always the greater, or “nevertheless” emphasis on what's to follow that word. And where do we put the greater emphasis? "...glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:19).

We're told that, on one occasion, President Howard W. Hunter told a group of fellow Apostles that to him, that was the most impressive part of all of section 19 is verse 19, the fact that Jesus is saying, in spite of all the suffering that I endured, in spite of the bleeding from every pore, and all of the infinite agony, "Nevertheless, glory be to the Father" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:19).

Now, let's pause here. Are you making the transition in your mind between what Jesus did and what Jesus – and by the way what Jesus did at an infinite level – and what Jesus is now asking Martin Harris to do and sacrifice at a mortal level, at a smaller level? As big as it is -- I mean, we can do the math, and talk about the economics, and what it costs Martin. But what you have here is Jesus reminding us that there are those things which are eternal. And the beginning part of this, he's talking about all these eternal punishments, and eternal damnation, and endless suffering kinds of things, but you can take it to the other side and talk about eternal reward, and endless reward, and infinite blessings. Those are God's, because that is his name. “Endless is my name” (Doctrine and Covenants 19:10). Eternal is his name, he says. So, he's trying to help Martin see that you have these mortal things to offer, and in exchange, I'm going to give you eternal reward.

Now brothers and sisters, you and I would hope that Martin would mortgage his farm and give that mortgage to E. B. Grandin, guaranteeing \$3000 to the print shop. You and I would hope that somehow there was a miraculous windfall of money for Martin and Lucy Harris, that all of a sudden, their farm multiplied, and they paid the debt, and their crops prospered, and they became even more rich. That's the human side of us wanting the story to end that way, but it doesn't.

You'll notice in the Savior's infinite suffering, there doesn't seem to be a lot of positive things that happen to him during that 24-hour period where he's going into the Atonement, and then working through Gethsemane, and the trials, and then the cross up, to the point where he could say, “It is finished”, and he died (John 19:30).

What's the point? The point is, for me, one of many lessons learned is, we always use this phrase: I am so grateful that Jesus died for me. And I love that phrase, and I'm going to keep using it.

But the older I get, the more in awe I stand of Jesus choosing to live for me. What do I mean by that? I mean that, from the moment he walked into Gethsemane, and when this infinite suffering started to descend upon him, he's pleading with the Father to take it away, "remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Everything in his mortal side, everything that he's inherited from Mary, his mother, his ability to suffer, his ability to die, his ability to hurt, all of that aspect of his being would have probably been pleading with him to give up the ghost, to die. But Jesus chose to live, rather than taking the easy route out of giving up the ghost prematurely. He chose to live, and by living, chose to extend that infinite agony over those long hours in Gethsemane, and through the trials, and onto the cross. And it was only when he could pull up at the very end and say, "It is finished", that he then chose to die for us (John 19:30). He gave up the ghost at that point, only when it was finished.

I love the fact that God gives each of us – you may not be a Martin Harris, having to mortgage much of your wealth in order for the kingdom of God to roll forth. But whatever God has asked you to sacrifice, that sacrifice is mortal in nature, and if we're willing to make that sacrifice, God promises that which is eternal in return.

If we could hear from Martin Harris today, do you think he would lament the fact that he had lost the farm? Do you think he would tell us about the acres of land that he had to give up, and tell us the different kinds of crops that he had grown successfully on those acres of land? Do you think he would tell us about how regretful he is at what he lost in the process? Or do you think, from an eternal perspective, today Martin Harris would say, I wish I had ten thousand farms to consecrate and sacrifice to the Lord for the building up of his kingdom on the earth?

Brothers and sisters, it was Elder Neal A. Maxwell, when speaking of sacrifices and placing our offerings on the altar of the Lord, who shared the concept once, he said, sometimes you and I make offerings on the altar of the Lord, and then we hang around, waiting for a receipt. I love the idea that the eternal promises are receipt enough. We don't need to sacrifice that which we have in mortality, and wait for God to then replace that, and give us more blessings that are mortal in nature. Now, he may; there are some of you who have experienced this over and over again, and there are some of you who will yet experience mortal blessings given to you in earthly prosperity because of sacrifices you're making for the kingdom of God. But the story of Jesus's Atonement is not one of mortal rewards and mortal blessings.

And the story of Martin Harris and the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon, or of Joseph Smith and the bringing forth of the kingdom of God, or their spouses, and most of these early Church history characters that we read about during this year, most of them are not going to be standing up in line saying, let me tell you about all the mortal blessings I got from God because of my sacrifices. But if we could hear their voices echoing from the other side of the veil, I think we would hear them praising God and saying, oh, I wish I would have had this perspective to be able to sacrifice even more.

Now notice verse 20: "Wherefore...". The word "wherefore" is this cause and effect, so the cause comes before, and the effect comes after. Because of everything I've talked about here, leading up to verse 20, all of this Atonement, of Jesus Christ's suffering symbolism, it leads to this effect, verse 20: "Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit."

So, we need to talk just briefly about one aspect of the Savior's infinite Atonement, and his infinite suffering here, that we sometimes maybe overlook. Remember, Jesus told Martin Harris, if you don't repent, you're going to suffer these things that I suffered. What are these things? He says, you've tasted, you've had a small degree. You'll remember, when Martin Harris lost the 116 pages, Joseph Smith and Martin both felt that they had lost their soul, this withdrawal of the Spirit. It's interesting to me that when we talk about the Savior's infinite Atonement in the Book of Mormon and in the New Testament, and we describe some of the things that Jesus experienced, like all of the offspring of sin, the sorrow, the regret, the guilt, the remorse, the pain that comes from sinning, the loss of self-respect, and that's a pretty long list. The Book of Mormon adds to that the pains of every living creature, all men, women and children, the sicknesses, the afflictions, the infirmities, the pains of death, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, all of these physical, mental, and emotional, negative aspects of mortality that you and I are very familiar with to one degree or another. But here he's saying, Martin, I suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they repent, which tells us that there are things Jesus endured for us that we never need to know, we never need to experience ourselves, if we'll just repent. What is that? He tells him, you've tasted a small portion of this.

You could cross reference that with section 76 verse 107 and section 88 verse 106, which happen to be two places in the scriptures where Jesus hints at what this potentially might be, but then he doesn't expound. Listen to section 76:107: "When [Christ] shall deliver up the kingdom, and present it unto the Father, spotless, saying: I have overcome and have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God." It looks as if endless punishment, eternal punishment, infinite punishment is what Jesus was called to endure in that infinite Atonement sacrifice. And the part that he is preserving us from ever having to experience is "the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God," saying, you never have to know what it's like to experience God's infinite and eternal punishment on you (Doctrine and Covenants 76:107).

Now, that brings us full circle back to the question, why should we care today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, about section 19, and about what Jesus did, and what effect does it have on us? The price that Jesus paid is the very thing that defines your worth. A price tag hanging on your soul, the cost to redeem and save our soul has an infinity sign on it. It's this infinite price that Jesus has to pay to save us all from "that awful monster, death and hell," both body and spirit that are mentioned here (2 Nephi 9:26). And now he's inviting all of us, together with Martin Harris, to repent, to sacrifice those things in mortality, which, by the way, were all given to us by him. It's

not as if Martin Harris got that farm completely independent of God; he's not a self-made man. God gave him all of those possessions, and now, in essence, he's saying, Martin, do you love me more than you love that prosperous dirt in your farm? Where is your heart? Is it locked up in the things of the world, or in the things of God?

Notice he says, in verse 23, "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me." I love that verse for us today, because Jesus is inviting us to make our life follow the pattern of his life, to make mortal offerings that turn into eternal blessings, not just for us.

Brothers and sisters, this story is not about Martin Harris. This story is about Martin being an instrument in the Lord's hands to bring forth the Book of Mormon so that God will then send this book into the world to gather the elect out of the four corners of the earth, and you and I are still benefitting today from Martin's sacrifice in 1829. And we're infinitely benefitting from Jesus's sacrifice, back in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. And he's saying, if you "Learn of me, and... [you're going to] walk in the meekness of my Spirit," then you are going to do things that will bring light, and life, and love, and truth into the world that is surrounding you today, and into the future as well (Doctrine and Covenants 19:23). Verse 26: "And again, I command thee that thou shalt not covet thine own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon, which contains the truth and the word of God--".

So, to conclude, look at verse 34: "Impart a portion of thy property, yea, even part of thy lands, and all save the support of thy family. Pay the debt thou hast contracted with the printer. Release thyself from bondage" (Doctrine and Covenants 19:34-35). Isn't it interesting that the release from bondage comes at what the world would say is putting yourself into bondage. Putting a mortgage on property you already own would be coming into bondage, but not from an eternal perspective. He's saying, "Release thyself from bondage" by doing this and paying the debt that you owe (Doctrine and Covenants 19:35).

Look at verse 38: "Pray always, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and great shall be your blessing -- yea, even more than if you should obtain treasures of earth and corruptibleness to the extent thereof." Think about it. If Martin had had the biggest farm in all of New York, in fact, if Martin had had the biggest farm in all of the United States in 1829 and 1830, what would he be saying about that today, from the other side of the veil? Would he be rubbing his hands together greedily, saying, let me tell you about my farm? Or would he be saying, I think I might have missed the boat; I think I might have missed the purpose of mortality. It wasn't to get caught up in the things of the world. It was to use those things that God had given me for the building up of the kingdom of God on the earth. And that's our prayer for all of us as we move forward on the covenant path this year, and into the future years, is that we can see those mortal blessings that God has given to us through eternal lenses, and see people and relationships, not as just mere mortal relationships, but as these lasting, infinitely beautiful potential relationships in the

eternities, and pray always that the Lord will guide us in how we use all those blessings that have been given to us.

He lives. He suffered for you. He paid the price for your soul so that you would never have to experience some of the things that he described here to Martin, but rather that you can experience the positive sides of endless, and eternal, and infinite on the rewards side and on the blessings side with him forever. And we leave that with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen. Know that you're loved.