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Look to God and Live

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Abstract: This article testifies that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to all the world's problems. We can "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47). Alma knew the consequences of running counter to that advice. There are three requisites for looking to God: a true knowledge of God, a knowledge of his commandments, and obedience to the commandments.

heart of victors as of the vanquished.

"As leaders in Israel, we must seek to dispel fear from among our people. A timid, fearing people cannot do their work well. The Latter-day Saints have a divinely assigned world mission so

great that they cannot afford to dissipate their strength in fear. The Lord has repeatedly warned his people against fear. Many a blessing is withheld because of our fears. He has expressly declared that men cannot stop his work on earth,

therefore, they who are engaged in the Lord's latter-day cause, and who fear, really trust man more than God, and thereby are robbed of their power to serve.

"The key to the conquest of fear has been given through the Prophet Joseph

Sunday Morning Session, October 7, 1962

LOOK TO GOD AND LIVE

Marion G. Romney of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, seen and unseen: My spirit is subdued by the potential of this occasion. There must be eight thousand of you within my vision, and I am advised that the radio and television audience is worldwide and may be numbered in the millions. If I thought of you in mass, I should be overwhelmed. But I am not thinking of you in mass. I want the relationship between each of you and me to be a personal one, for I bear a divine message of the greatest significance to each of you. Fully accepted, it will bring to each of us the abundant life of which Jesus spoke. Widely accepted, the rivalry and contention among nations would cease and peace would flow down as dew from heaven upon all the peoples of the earth.

This great consummation will be realized when and only when men catch the meaning of and live by the full implication of Paul's great statement in his sermon on Mars' hill:

"God that made the world and all things . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

"Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

"That they should seek the Lord, . . . and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; . . . For we are . . . his offspring." (Acts 17:24-28.)

I have chosen for my text Alma's final charge to his son Helaman—" . . . look to God and live." (Alma 37:47.) Alma, an American prophet-statesman, was speaking about 93 BC. He was well qualified to give this charge because he had experienced the consequences of running counter to it, and he had enjoyed the blessings of obeying it. Through terrifying suffering he had learned that the penalty for not looking to God is pain and death. Through a subsequent life of righteousness he had learned that the reward for looking to God is fullness of life.

He had learned from the records of the people who had inhabited America between 2200 BC and his own time that they had been utterly destroyed in a fratricidal war resulting from their re-

fusal to "look to God."

He had learned from the history of this vanished race the word of God to their prophets, the word of God to the prophets of his own people, and from revelations to himself and from his own experience, that the only way his people could escape the fate of their predecessors was for them to look to God.

As chief of state he had learned the limitations of civil government and the inability of political power to bring the abundant life or the perpetuation of civilization. So sure was he that his people, if they would live, must look to God that when he saw them departing from the ways of God, he relinquished his office as chief of state ". . . that he himself might go forth among his people, . . . [and] preach the word of God unto them, to stir them up in remembrance of their duty, and that he might pull down, by the word of God, all the pride and craftiness and all the contentions which were among his people, seeing no [other] way that he might reclaim them [from their wickedness]. . . ." (Alma 4:19.)

It was against this background that Alma so earnestly sought to impress upon his sons the message of our text—" . . . look to God and live."

Six thousand years of human history attests to Alma's wisdom. Every chapter thereof teaches that the uninspired wisdom of men cannot build a lasting stable civilization nor bring peace and happiness to individual men. All the evidence teaches that if man would live abundantly and preserve his civilization, he must look to God. Generation after generation has learned through sad experience that ". . . cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man. . . ." (2 Nephi 4:34.)

Nor are the prophets the only ones to be persuaded that "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: . . ." (Psalm 127:1.) Josephus, for example, introducing his *Antiquities of the Jews*, says that: "Moses, our legislator, . . . deemed it exceeding necessary, that he who would conduct his own life well, and give laws to others, in the first place should consider the Divine nature, . . . [Nor did Moses think that] any thing he should write [would] tend to the promotion of virtue in his readers; . . . unless they be taught first of all, that God is the Father and Lord of all things, . . . [He there-

fore] did not begin the establishment of his laws after the same manner that other legislators did; [i.e.,]" and I am still quoting from Josephus, "upon contracts and other rites between one man and another, but by raising their minds upward to regard God, and his creation of the world; and by persuading them, that we men are the most excellent of the creatures of God upon earth . . . when he had once demonstrated that God was possessed of perfect virtue, he supposed that men also ought to strive after the participation of it; . . ." (*The Works of Josephus*, pp. 38-39.)

In an exhaustive treatise on *The Good Society*, a modern author, Hugh Evander Willis, A.B., A.M., LL.B., LL.M., LL.D., Professor of Law, Emeritus, Indiana University, concludes that the best and only remedy to the present problems and the establishment of a good society is "the religion of Jesus." He makes a great point of the fact that the only motive strong enough to induce men to exercise that self-control required by the religion of Jesus is love. "Jesus," he says, "proposed," (he uses the word *proposed* because he does not accept Elohim and Jesus as actually Father and Son.) "to extend this love to the entire human race through teaching [not as a fact, mind you, not as a reality, but as a device] the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

Here we have an author who is so convinced that men must look to God in order to live in a good society that he deems it necessary to teach the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man even though he does not believe it. The hope for a good society of this man and millions of professing Christians and other men of goodwill who adopt this thesis is doomed to failure.

The world crisis we now face is upon us precisely because men have been and now are seeking the abundant life, for men, and peace among nations—the fruits of looking to God—by preaching the doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man without actually believing them. Of such, the Lord says, ". . . they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, . . ." (Joseph Smith 2:19.)

The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, taught as mere devices, never have and never will, worlds without end, promote in men the love which inspires transforming self-control. The one and only motive

Smith," Brother Widtsoe continues. "If ye are prepared ye shall not fear." (D&C 38:30.) That is a message from the Doctrine and Covenants, and Brother Widtsoe says in conclusion, "That divine message needs repeating

today in every stake and ward. Are we prepared to surrender to God's commandments? . . . If we can honestly answer yes, we can bid fear depart. And the degree of fear in our hearts may well be measured by our prepara-

tion by righteous living, such as should characterize Latter-day Saints."

God bless us to eliminate fear and to meet every challenge which the priesthood of God places upon us, I pray humbly, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

strong enough to do this is a divinely given, moving, living witness that God is our Father and that Jesus is his divine Son, our Redeemer.

The need for us to look to God, however, in order to live is inherent in the very nature of man and his environment. It is not founded on arbitrary command but on universal law. Happiness, joy, peace, salvation, and every other component of the abundant life for men and peace among nations, are attained by obedience to the laws upon which they are predicated. They can be had in no other way. God's commands but prescribe those laws.

Mortal man is a dual being, a spirit child of God tabernacled in a physical body. Endowed with agency, he is placed here in mortality between opposing forces. The influence of God on the one hand inspires, pleads, and urges him to follow the way of life. On the other hand is the power of Satan tempting him to disbelieve and disregard God's commandments. The consequences of his choices are of the all-or-nothing sort. There is no way for him to escape the influence of these opposing powers. Inevitably he is led by one or the other. His God-given free agency gives him the power and option to choose. But choose he must. Nor can he serve both of them at the same time, for, as Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24.)

"To every man there openeth
To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way,
The high soul climbs the high way
The low soul gropes the low.
And in between, on the misty flats
The rest drift to and fro.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go."

(John Openham)

All men may, if they will, choose the way, the high way, for God endows every man that cometh into the world with agency and a sure guide—a guide which will lead him unerringly through the world if he will but hearken to it. Listen to this sublime assurance:

" . . . the Spirit," meaning the Spirit of Christ, "giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

"And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God,

even the Father.

"And the Father teacheth him of the covenant, . . ." (See D&C 84:46-48) that is, of the gospel of Jesus Christ which he has restored to the earth in these last days for the salvation of the whole world.

You see, my beloved brethren and sisters, whoever you are, wherever you are, into whatever circumstances you are born, the Spirit of Christ attends us and, until we reject it, prompts us and encourages us to noble and high endeavor.

The covenant, the gospel, which you will learn through the servants of God, tells us how to look to God. There are three requisites:

A true concept and knowledge of God;

A knowledge of his commands; and third, obedience to those commands.

That man might have this true concept and knowledge of him, God has, through the ages, repeatedly revealed himself. He revealed himself to Adam, to Abraham, to Moses. Christ was God's revelation of himself to men in the Meridian of Time. For the benefit of us who live in this day he revealed himself to the Prophet Joseph Smith, Jun., in the spring of 1820 in Palmyra, New York.

Just as he revealed himself anew in each dispensation, so has he as often restated his commandments. He restated them for us of this day also through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

The Old Testament contains commandments God gave through the prophets to ancient Israel. The New Testament contains those given in the Dispensation of the Meridian of Time. The Book of Mormon contains the commandments delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants of America. The Doctrine and Covenants is a compilation of commandments which the Lord gave to the Prophet Joseph Smith. They contain the instructions from which we learn how to look to God today. They were given "for the sake of the whole world" and are binding upon all of us. From them we learn whom to worship and how to worship and the course to take in order to escape the calamities which God sees coming upon the inhabitants of the world.

"For [said he] a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming.

"Behold, I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem; and my word shall be verified at this time as it hath hitherto been verified." (D&C 5:19-20.)

And, on the other hand, the Lord promises that if we will repent, look to him and keep his commandments, he will fight our battles, destroy our enemies, and prosper us in the land; that we shall be a free people, and he will be our King and our lawgiver.

With the perfection of Telstar we have the means for instantaneous worldwide communication. Sobered by this awesome facility, someone has commented, "Now that we have the means, what do we have to say?"

From what we have already said it is clear that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is ready with the answer, for it has been commissioned of heaven to carry the divine message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, to every living soul—a message delivered, in part, by God himself—delivered in full by him, his Beloved Son, and other heavenly beings to the Latter-day Prophet for the salvation of all who live in this day.

A message that God the Father and Jesus Christ his Son, our Redeemer, live; that they are within our reach, seeking to guide and direct and give us light and life; a message containing the true concept and knowledge of God and a restatement of his commandments to men; a message which, if believed, will give us the power to keep the commandments which will bring to each of us personally, my beloved brothers and sisters, whoever you are, wherever you may be, whatever the circumstances in which you live—the abundant life, which is peace of mind and comfort of soul; a message which, if widely accepted, will bring peace and goodwill among all nations!

We Latter-day Saints have learned the facts of this message from the words of the modern prophets. We have learned of their truth, for ourselves, however, by personal revelation to each of us. In the same manner, you may obtain like witness by taking the course which leads to it. I testify to you that I do know that the message we bear is true, and I plead with you and all men everywhere to come—look to God and live.

That it may be so, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.