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FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

Faith in Jesus Christ is the first principle of the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST (A of F 4). One who has this faith believes him to be the living Son of God, trusts in his goodness and power, repents of one's sins, and follows his guidance. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is awakened as individuals hear his gospel (Rom. 10:17). By faith they enter the gate of REPENTANCE and BAPTISM, and receive the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST, which leads to the way of life ordained by Christ (2 Ne. 31:9, 17–18). Those who respond are “alive in Christ because of [their] faith” (2 Ne. 25:25). Because God's way is the only way that leads to salvation, “it is impossible to please him” without faith (Heb. 11:6). Faith must precede miracles, signs, gifts of the Spirit, and righteousness, for “if there be no faith . . . God can do no miracle” (Ether 12:12). The Book of Mormon prophet MORONI₂ summarized these points:

The Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men. And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. And he hath said: Repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved [Moro. 7:32–34].

Although in common speech people speak of having faith in people, principles, or things, faith in its eternal sense is faith in, and only in, Jesus Christ. It is not sufficient to have faith in just anything; it must be focused on “the only true God, and Jesus Christ” whom he has sent (John 17:3). Having faith means having complete confidence in Jesus Christ alone to save humankind from sin and the finality of death. By his grace “are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8). If “Christ be not risen,” then “your faith is also vain” and “ye are yet in your sins” (1 Cor. 15:14, 17). To trust in the powers of this world is to “trust in the arm of flesh” and, in effect, to reject Christ and his gospel (2 Ne. 4:34).

Paul explained, “Now faith is the substance [or assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [the demonstration or proof] of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Mortals must live by faith, since divine realities are veiled from their physical senses. The invisible truths of the gospel are made manifest by the Holy Spirit and are seen in the lives of people who live by faith, following the daily directions of that Spirit. Though most mortals have not seen the spiritual realities beyond this physical world, they can accept such premises in faith, based on personal spiritual witness(es) and the scriptural record of former and latter-day special witnesses whom God has called and who have experienced these realities firsthand.

True faith is belief plus action. Faith implies not only the mental assent or cognition of belief



Christ Healing the Blind Man, by Carl Heinrich Bloch (1834–1890; oil on copper plate; 20" × 30"). Jesus heals a man blind from birth (John 9). Healings and other miracles are one manifestation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Courtesy the Frederiksborg Museum, Hillerød, Denmark.

but also its implementation. Beliefs in things both spiritual and secular impel people to act. Failure to act on the teachings and commandments of Christ implies absence of faith in him. Faith in Jesus Christ impels people to act in behalf of Christ, to follow his example, to do his works. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21; italics added). James further emphasized that "faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:17–18; see also GRACE).

Righteousness leads to greater faith, while sin and wickedness diminish faith. "The just [man] shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). Violating the commandments of God brings a loss of the Spirit of the Lord and a loss of faith, for faith in Jesus Christ is incompatible with disobedience. The Book of Mormon prophet ALMA₂ characterized the words of Christ as a seed that is tested as people plant it

in their hearts and nourish it. If they desire to see the seed grow, they must give it room and nourish it with their faith. If it is a good seed, it will swell and grow, and they will know that it is good. However, if they neglect the seed, it will wither away. But if they will "nourish the word . . . by [their] faith with great diligence," it will grow into a tree of life, and they will taste its fruit, which is eternal life (Alma 32:26–43).

Faith may be nurtured and renewed through scripture study, prayer, and works consistent with the commandments of the gospel. Because those who act on faith, repent, and are baptized receive a remission of sins, they have reason to hope for eternal life (Moro. 7:41). With this hope, their faith in Jesus Christ further inspires individuals to minister to each other in CHARITY, even as Christ would have done (Moro. 7:44), for the "end of the commandment is charity out of . . . faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1:5). "Charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever" (Moro. 7:47). Thus, faith, or "steadfastness in Christ," enables people to ENDURE TO THE END, continuing in faith and charity (2 Ne. 31:20; 1 Tim. 2:15; D&C 20:29). True faith is enduring and leads to an assurance that one's efforts have not gone unnoticed and that God is pleased with one's attitude and effort to implement the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ in one's personal life.

While Alma explained how faith leads to knowledge, modern LDS commentary also points out how certain kinds of knowledge strengthen faith (*MD*, pp. 261–67). The knowledge that God exists, a correct understanding of his character, and a reassurance that he approves of one's conduct can help one's faith "become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness" ("Lectures on Faith," pp. 65–66; see LECTURES ON FAITH).

The restoration of the gospel in modern times was initiated by an act of faith by the youthful Joseph Smith. Reading the Bible, he was struck by the encouragement of James to all who lack wisdom that they should "ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:6). The visions that came to Joseph Smith in answer to his prayers (see VISIONS OF JOSEPH SMITH) are evidence that prayers are "answered according to [one's] faith" (Mosiah 27:14). Though God delights to bless his children, he "first, [tries] their faith, . . . then shall the greater things be made manifest" (3 Ne. 26:9). But there will be "no witness until after the trial of your faith" (Ether 12:6), and "without faith you can do

nothing” (D&C 8:10). “Signs come by faith, not by the will of men” (D&C 63:10).

Because faith involves the guidance of the Holy Ghost to individuals, it leads them by an invisible hand to “the unity of the faith” (Eph. 4:13). Through the strength of others and increased confidence in the Lord’s way, faith provides a shield against the adversary (Eph. 6:16). Similarly, faith has been described as part of one’s armor, serving as a “breastplate of faith and love” (1 Thes. 5:8) in protecting the faithful from evil.

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FALL OF ADAM

Latter-day Saints recognize the fall of ADAM and EVE as an actual event that occurred in the GARDEN OF EDEN and has affected the entire earth and everyone in the human family. The Fall was a necessary step in the eternal progress of mankind and introduced the conditions that made the mission of Jesus Christ absolutely necessary for SALVATION. The four STANDARD WORKS and the teachings of many prominent leaders of the Church are the sources for the LDS doctrine of the Fall. These sources dwell at length on the beneficial effects of the Fall as part of God’s “great plan of happiness” (Alma 42:8) for his children and testify that Adam and Eve are to be honored for their actions (*see* PLAN OF SALVATION; PURPOSE OF EARTH LIFE).

The creation of the earth was a multistep process in which the fall of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden were the final necessary steps in bringing about the mortal condition. Without the Fall, Adam and Eve would have had no children (2 Ne. 2:23); hence, the human family would not have come into existence upon this earth under the conditions and circumstances in the garden. The prophet LEHI explained, “Adam fell that men might be” (2 Ne. 2:25), and ENOCH declared, “Because that Adam fell, we are” (Moses 6:48).

After the Fall, Adam and Eve were taught the gospel of Jesus Christ and rejoiced in their situation. Adam blessed God, saying, “Because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God” (Moses 5:10). And Eve was glad, saying, “Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient” (Moses 5:11).

The Fall was not an accident, not an obstruction to God’s plan, and not a wrong turn in the course of humanity. “The Lord . . . created the earth that it should be inhabited” by his children (1 Ne. 17:36), and since Adam and Eve would have had no children in their Edenic condition, the Fall was a benefit to mankind. It was part of the Father’s plan, being both foreknown to him and essential to the human family. All these things were “done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things” (2 Ne. 2:24).

The Fall brought two kinds of death upon Adam, Eve, and their posterity: the separation of the spirit and the physical body, which the scriptures call the “temporal death” (Alma 11:42–43); and being shut out of God’s presence, which is called SPIRITUAL DEATH (2 Ne. 9:6; D&C 29:41). Jesus Christ redeems all mankind unconditionally from the two deaths brought by the fall of Adam (*see* ORIGINAL SIN), raises all mankind from the grave, and restores them to God’s presence for a judgment (Hel. 14:16–17). The Atonement also redeems individuals from the consequences of their own sins on conditions of repentance.

The Book of Mormon explains, “The natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19; cf. Alma 22:14; 42:9–15). God “created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, . . . and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man” (Morm. 9:12; cf. 2 Ne. 9:6).

The Doctrine and Covenants states that the Fall occurred as a result of transgression: “The devil tempted Adam, and he partook of the forbidden fruit and transgressed the commandment. . . . Wherefore, I, the Lord God, caused that he should be cast out from the Garden of Eden, from my