

Who Is Our Enemy?

The Response of the Living Church Is Love

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War has been declared on your soul. Victory can only be won through the power and authority of Jesus Christ. Genesis 3:4 states, *“Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him; and also that I should give him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten I caused that he should be cast down; and he became Satan.”*

Although Satan was cast down in heaven, he took his battle to earth and seeks to destroy God’s creation - mankind. The book of Revelation 13:7-10 indicates this with these words, *“And it was given unto him {Satan} to make war with the Saints and to overcome them; and power was given over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”*

In D&C 76:3k-m, while Joseph Smith Jr. and Sidney Rigdon were working on the *New Translation of the Bible* this revelation was received, *“for we beheld Satan , that old serpent, even the Devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ; wherefore he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasses them round about. And we saw a vision of the sufferings of those with whom he made war and overcame, for thus came the voice of the Lord unto us.”* This revelation was given through Joseph Smith Jr. on February 16, 1832. We see in these scriptures that the Devil has not only declared war on us, but that war continues in our day. While Jesus walked on the earth the Devil desired to stop Jesus from going to the cross and die for the sins of all mankind. Likewise, the Devil does not want Zion to be built in the last days to give refuge and protection for the faithful.

But this is not all. The Devil is described in the Scriptures as subtle, cunning, a liar, a deceiver, a destroyer, and a devourer. He works not just in obvious ways, but like a cobweb, he desires to ensnare us and trap us in order to destroy us. He uses vices, enticements, our sins, and other things to create diversions, temptations, systems and societies that can take us away from Jesus, and each other, if we are not careful.

We read in Ephesians 6:12, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* Too often we are misled to think our main difficulties come upon us firstly because of other people. Although this may be true at times, we err to focus our battle only on “flesh and blood” and forget that war has been declared and is being waged upon us by the Prince of Darkness. This is a cunning tool, because if we focus only on other people as being the cause of the problems such as having unity within the body of Christ, we will find it most difficult to survive the war against our soul. We cannot win the battle unless we rely on

the Lord and understand what and who we are fighting against. The Devil loves for us to fight with each other, or against other churches. Those churches also do battle with us, and we forget about he who seeks to destroy and devour God's creation. We have been told to *"seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:38) We must not lose our focus on Jesus and the kingdom of God. We find comfort in the words written by David H. Smith in the hymn – *Let Us Pray for One Another*. (Hymns of the Restoration, #314, 3rd verse}

Pray in Faith, and pray unceasing, To the God we love and trust,

For our prayers are much availing If we walk upright and just;

Be not weary of exhorting; Heed the lesson of each day;

And that we may be unwavering, For each other let us pray.

While Jesus was here on earth, we do not see Him trying to overthrow the Roman Empire. He told His parents, Mary and Joseph, that He was to be about His Father's business. His Father's business was to be the sacrificial Lamb, build the Church and restore men and women to the Father. The Roman Empire came to the end just as all earthly kingdoms will do. We are told that in the end-times that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our God (Revelation 11:15). His kingdom is eternal and Jesus will reign as the King of Zion.

So how does this change what needs to come about in our hearts and minds? The change begins with one simple word – Love. We see that the message which is at the center of the gospel is love. All of the law hangs on the Two Great Commandments found in Matthew 22:35-39. We are told in these verses, to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts, and love our neighbors as thyself. We know that Jesus came to earth in love, because it is revealed to us, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Begotten Son."* (John 3:16) We are to *"love him, because he first loved us."* (I John 4:19) Love fosters unity and provides the ability and condition for us to exercise the spiritual gifts and the fruits of the Spirit such as faith, hope, patience, etc. Arthur Oakman was truly inspired with light and truth when he said, *"the gospel is the gospel, because it is the gospel of love and sacrifice."*

I wish to share a testimony in regards to this central theme of the gospel that happened to me while I was preparing for the opening sermon of the 2017 In-town Reunion, in the Center Place. As I was preparing for the sermon, I became aware that the Lord desired to give a message in this very first service, not only during the service, but right at the very beginning of the first service. Often, a message is given in the body of the sermon or near the end of the sermon. Many times, a message, if there is one, is given later in the week after the people have had experience of living with one another. This time, however, the Lord made it clear that it was to be right at the very beginning. I don't recall another occasion that a message being placed like that to the people by the Lord to start a reunion prior to other thoughts being expressed.

What subject would be of such importance that the Lord would want the people thinking about it and acting upon it from the very beginning. The message, at this time, was about charity. I want to share this message again with you, as I did that night at the reunion.

“The Lord wants to speak to you. I call you to gather in the spirit of charity. As I have said before,

Without charity you can do nothing.

D&C 16:4d

The greatest gift is charity.

I Corinthians 13:13

Charity never faileth.

I Corinthians 13:8

Charity is the pure love of Christ.

Moroni 7:52

The two Great Commandments are centered in this love.

Matthew 22:35-39

Gather together in the spirit of charity.

Tonight, before you sleep, pray that charity will abound among you this week, first within yourself, and then in the hearts of others.

I am a God of miracles, and there is no greater miracle than when charity reigns in the hearts of a people. Charity has the power to cleanse, to heal, and to unite. May it be so with this people. Amen.”

We find in Alma 14:11-14 a tremendous conversion to the Lord had taken place amongst a portion of the Lamanite people. Ammon (one of the sons of King Mosiah) had done a marvelous work and a wonder, along with his three brothers, within the Lamanite people. The Lamanites had been a blood-thirsty people and hated the Nephite people, and the sons of Mosiah were Nephites. This is what took place according to Alma 14:11-12 following the Lamanite conversion, *“Yea, I say unto you, As the Lord liveth, as many of the Lamanites as believed in their preaching {Ammon and his brothers}, and were converted unto the Lord, never did fall away, for they became a righteous people; They did lay down the weapons of their rebellion, that they did not fight against God any more, neither against any of their brethren.”*

We learn several things about what took place in the lives of this people of the Lamanites who changed their lives from a life of hate to one filled with love.

1. These Lamanites became a righteous people. This is how the people, later in the Book of Mormon, in IV Nephi would become also. They would become righteous because *“of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.”* A people that loves God and neighbor with all their souls will be *“of one heart, and one mind, and dwell in righteousness; and there will be no poor among them.”* Jesus even commanded his

disciples to “love your enemies”. (Matthew 5:46) The people of the Lamanites who were converted, became a people fitted for Zion and the Kingdom of God.

2. Because of their love for God and other people that filled their hearts, *“they would not fight against God anymore.”* How do we fight against God? What are the weapons that we use against God? We don’t use swords or knives against Him. No, we fight against God with our pride, selfishness, envy, lust, power, greed, personal agendas, etc. No church or kingdom can be of the Lord and be living by those qualities. We can only lay those weapons down through love, sacrifice, humility, gentleness, patience, kindness, and the other gifts and fruits of the Spirit.
3. This people would not fight against any of their brethren. *We see this meant not any!* These Lamanites would join the Nephite nation, and no longer fight against them and be at war with them. At the same time, they would not fight against the Lamanites that they would leave behind. This generation refused to take back up the weapons that they had lain down. The love of God in our hearts works miracles in us as it did for this people. There is no greater miracle than what takes place as love heals our hearts.
4. And finally, and most importantly, the Lamanites were converted to the Lord. According to the scripture they were not converted to Ammon, or to a people or to a church, but the Lord. If you are converted fully to the Lord you will love the people and be humble, and be a willing servant within His church. If you are not converted to the Lord you will not be able to keep your promises to God, to the people or to the church.

In coming to the Lord, we receive of the promises of mercy and grace. These two gifts are associated with the love of God.

To understand these two principles found in the Scriptures we need to better understand them. Grace and mercy are mentioned many times in all three books of Scripture. Both mercy and grace involve the love that God has for men, women and youth, but these two aspects of love are slightly different in meaning and purpose.

One definition that helps us see the difference in mercy and grace is this – Mercy is not getting what we do deserve, and grace is getting what we do not deserve.

There are many examples of grace and mercy in all three books of the Scriptures. The most important example is Jesus on the cross. Mercy pays the penalty for our sins at the cross even though we deserve the punishment because of our sins, and grace provides and makes the way to enter into eternity with God even though we did not earn it. To receive of these two gifts, we must keep His commandments, repent of our sins, and have faith in God and Jesus Christ. By doing this we become alive in Jesus, and become His Living Church.

The Book of Mormon is very clear on mercy and grace. Here is what we find at the very end of the entire book, in Moroni 10:30, *“And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the*

shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot."

We must respond to the love of God and Jesus Christ by choosing to follow them and by seeking to live our lives for them. It says in the verse just before the above scripture, in Moroni 10:29 that we must, *"come unto Christ, and be perfected in him"*. We have a response that we are invited to make and so we must not deny His power. But of ourselves we cannot be completely perfected and sanctified except by coming to Christ and through the shedding of the blood of Christ is how we become sanctified. Jesus completes and fulfills the sanctification process, as we do our part to become sanctified. The prayer over the bread and wine during the Sacrament says this, *"O God, the eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread (wine) to the souls of all those who partake (drink) of it."*(D&C 17 22d, 23b) The sanctification of the bread and wine comes by the sacrifice at Calvary. We partake of the emblems in *"remembrance of the body"*, and the *"blood of thy Son which was shed for them"* {you and me}, and that we are willing to take upon us His name.

In the New Testament, the book of Titus 3:5 says it this way, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."* We see in this scripture once again the gospel of love in mercy and grace.

In Ephesians 2:8-9 we find, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, but is the gift of God; Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

In James 2:23,25, *"Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only... For, as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead."*

We see works are important and essential to salvation because they are our response to God. We are saved by mercy because of our sins - we deserve to pay the penalty for sin, which wages *"are death"* (Romans 6:23). And no unclean thing can enter into the kingdom of God. We are saved by grace because we receive the hope of eternal life which by our sins we do not deserve.

To further support this understanding I close with 2 scriptures.

II Nephi 11:39, *"Yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven, save it be this Jesus Christ of which I have spoken, whereby man can be saved."* {See also II Nephi 13:31, Mosiah 1:116, 3:11, Acts 4:12}

Genesis 6:63, *"For, by the water ye keep the commandments [water baptism], by the Spirit ye are justified {vindicated} {confirmation of the Holy Spirit}, and by the blood ye are sanctified {Sacrament of the Lord's Supper}."* {See D&C 17:21-22, the prayers over these ordinances}

