

Thoughts on Sin All Sin Forgiven?

Bruce H. Porter

The paragraphs below are personal thoughts on the concept of “Sin” and the way it is addressed and explained in Scripture and by Joseph Smith. This is not meant to be a finished product, nor is it organized in any way. The phrases in red are in need of references from scripture or statements of Joseph Smith. The article on Grace Mercy and Justice should be read along with these notes. It should be expected that there are changes that need to be made in these notes from grammar, punctuation, spelling realizing there may be doctrinal concepts that might need clarifying or expanded and perhaps corrected.

In the King James Version of the Gospel of Matthew record that ‘all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men’ (1). The terrible questions often arise: Why should I try to be good or better if all sin is forgiven? Why will we go to a lesser kingdom if all sins are forgiven? If God forgives all sin won’t everyone be in the presence of God in the end anyway?

The Prophet Joseph Smith adds five words to the corresponding verse in the Inspired Version of the Bible. Those words are: “who receive me and repent” (2)

However, Joseph Smith made some direct statements about the same concept, but in an eternal context:

TPJS 358

All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for Jesus will save all except the sons of perdition.

TPJS 356

I have a declaration to make as to the provisions which God hath made to suit the conditions of man--made from before the foundation of the world. What has Jesus said? *All sin, and all blasphemies, and every transgression, except one, that man can be guilty of, may be forgiven; and there is a salvation for all men, either in this world or the world to come, who have not committed the unpardonable sin, there being a provision either in this world or the world of spirits. Hence God hath made a provision that every spirit in the eternal world can be ferreted out and saved unless he has committed that unpardonable sin which cannot be remitted to him either in this world or the world of spirits. God has wrought out a salvation for all men, unless they have committed a certain sin; and every man who has a friend in the eternal world can save him, unless he has committed the unpardonable sin.*

In the D&C section 76, (3) the Lord expands the understanding of a forgiveness of sins for all things created. Christ is to ‘bear the sins of the world’ (grace or sometimes called “original sin” i.e. the effects of the fall of Adam of physical and spiritual death) and to ‘cleanse it from all

unrighteousness... through him' (because of faith unto repentance, the character change of humanity).

There seems to be a definitional difference between the words 'saved,' 'forgiven' and even perhaps the word 'remitted' when it comes to their connection with the word 'sin'. **Joseph Smith stated that being saved in any kingdom except outer darkness is a salvation.** Being "saved" from mortality is being saved from a not so good situation. Death is a salvation from mortality.

When Adam was driven from Eden, the Lord explained to him that to survive he would need to labor in sorrow, eat by the sweat of work all of his life. The Lord told him that the earth would naturally provide weeds and would not yield it's sustenance without hard labor. He concluded this depressing message to Adam with a glimmer of hope by telling him not to worry or be depressed because he will get to die and return to the dust from whence he came. We all must give up the ghost as death is everyone's supreme sacrifice. Salvation is choosing to be in a better place and environment than before. Being picked up in the middle of the ocean with only a life jacket by a rusty damp leaking cargo ship passing by is being saved from that watery environment, even though it might not be Royal Caribbean cruise line. The hope is to be soon saved from the rusty leaking ship itself. 'Forgiven or forgiveness' means that the sentence or consequence worthy of the infraction is forgotten or ignored and any punishment due by the demands of justice is not administered. The word "remitted" seems to mean to cancel, set aside or suspend the consequence from inflicting or exacting the total debt or punishment owed. Each of these words in their connection to sin: to be "saved from sin" or have our "sins forgiven" and having our "sins remitted" all require a Savior that is able to provide a redemption from the consequential justice that should be met.

Sin

There are two issues of sin in the scriptures that plague the Christian world; the first is the concept of the 'original sin' of Adam and Eve that is often called "The Fall" which placed the consequence of spiritual and physical death upon all humanity. The second sin of scripture are those infractions that belong personally to the individual rather than the primal couple. **'We believe that we are punished for our own sins and not for Adam's transgression' (A.o.F. #2).** This Second Article of Faith states the doctrinal purpose and nature of Grace and Mercy. We are saved from the sins of the fall by "grace" without any action, thought, works or faith. Grace is unconditional and is a free gift from God for all humanity. As individuals we have no control over the effects of the fall and therefore, can make no restoration for the choice to leave the Garden of Eden and the presence of God made by our first Father and Mother. We are saved from the fall **by grace and not by any works**, it is by grace that we are saved from the effects of the fall **"after all we can do"**, which means 'no matter what we do'. Thus, 'Grace' is an unconditional salvation from the fall of Adam. This we know to be true because all will be restored to the fundamental blessings of the Garden by grace, as all will be resurrected and become immortal (as was Adam and Eve were before the fall) and all will be brought back to the presence of God (as was Adam and Eve were before the fall). **'The work and glory of God is to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man'**. The first an unconditional work by God and the second a conditional work by Christ with our involvement. 'Immortality' is achieved by

the grace of God and ‘eternal life’ is only achieved by mercy, which is conditional based upon our contributions to the Atonement.

Mormon 9:13

13. And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are *brought back into the presence of the Lord*; yea, this is wherein *all men are redeemed*, because the death of Christ bringeth to pass the resurrection, which bringeth to pass a redemption from an endless sleep, from which sleep all men shall be awakened by the power of God when the trump shall sound; and they shall come forth, both small and great, and *all shall stand before his bar*, being redeemed and loosed from this eternal band of death, which death is a temporal death.

Alma 42:14

14. And thus we see that *all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.*

Alma 42:23

23. But God ceaseth not to be God, and *mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement*; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.

However, to remain in the presence of God **with a confidence that waxes strong**, ‘mercy’ will be extended only to those who ‘exercise faith (in Christ and the atonement) unto repentance’ or the change of character. For God covenants with **none but the penitent**.

2 Nephi 2:7

7. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, *unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit*; and *unto none else* can the ends of the law be answered.

Alma 11:40

40. And he shall come into the world to redeem his people; and he shall take upon him the transgressions of those who believe on his name; and these are they that shall have eternal life, and salvation cometh to *none else*.

Mercy protects one from the demands of justice providing the time required to develop the character of God to dwell with God because of our ‘faith unto repentance.’ Repentance is the process of changing character, a bi-product of a true faith in Christ and the Atonement. The character change must be a product of personal agency. Our perfection does not come by ordinance, miracle or magic wand but by choice and desire.

Alma 34:15-17

15. And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about *the bowels of mercy, which*

overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

16. And thus *mercy can satisfy the demands of justice*, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while *he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.*

17. Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to exercise your faith unto repentance, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you;

The first question that should be asked is: What does the word “sin” mean? The definition of the word “sin” should be explained before one is able to understand of the concept of ‘forgiveness of sin’ or being saved from our sins.

The word “sin” in the scriptures; both the Old Testament (in Hebrew) and in the New Testament (in Greek) have the same basic meaning. The word “sin” is a term used in archery, as is the word “repentance”. “Sin” means to ‘miss the mark’ to miss the target, and “repentance” means to ‘take aim again’ try harder to be better than you were before. The declaration that one has sinned is a simple statement meaning that they have ‘missed the mark’. Of course, the ‘mark’ must be defined in order to determine a ‘miss’ or ‘sin’. The words ‘sin’ or ‘sinned’ is found throughout scriptures, but each time ‘sin’ is read, the phrase ‘missed the mark’ should be seen in the minds eye. To say that a person was caught in sin is really stating that a person was caught missing the mark, what ever the mark might be or who it might be defined. The ‘marks’ are placed most often by the covenant and faith of the believer. Is a person able to be disobedient without knowing the law and entering into a covenant of obedience? The Book of Mormon cries a resounding NO to answer to this question. The missing of the mark could be because of ignorance or because of a choice with a knowledge of the law. Where there is no law there is no punishment and he who sins against the greater light (knowledge) will receive the greater condemnation. If the target is not known and cannot be seen then one has no option but to miss the mark without condemnation. (Romans 2:12; Jacob 9:

The marks that are missed and therefore declared a ‘sin’ might be defined by man or by God. Even Christ warned that some would go about “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). The days have gone by (thank goodness) that many in the Church considered it a sin to use white or bleached flour in the making of bread, touting that it was against the Word of Wisdom. An individual may “miss the mortal mark’ of tradition or interpretation if one drinks a *cold* cola drink, because the Word of Wisdom states that ‘*hot drinks* are not for the body or belly’. Is it really a sin to God, or to man, to smoke a cigarette, have a cup of coffee, or dress in a perceived unacceptable attire for a church meeting or perhaps go to a store on the Sabbath? Often it is our own interpretations, traditions and opinions that make us believe another is committing a “sin” that will be judged by a vengeful God.

Self-righteous religionists often have the tendency to put fences around the laws or targets and then judge the righteousness of other people based upon personal fences. This was an issue discussed by Christ about the Pharisees. To illustrate this concept, lets say that the law might state that ‘hot drinks are not for the belly’. We can begin to build fences around the law to make

sure we keep the law. The fences might be selective ‘hot drinks’ or inclusive of all ‘hot drinks’. One view might say that “hot” is the qualifying and restrictive word that’s not good. Looking at ‘hot drinks this way, one might conclude that eating any and all ‘hot’ soups would be an offence to God. Other fences might be erected by defining what might be in the hot drink that we shouldn’t have. Subsequently, one might construct another fence with the chemical ingredients being the basis of the fence, like caffeine. Once the ingredient is determined to be the ‘ingested sin’ then a judgmental disobedience begins to spread far and wide. The new rule may now include cold drinks and spill over to foods that may have the same ingredient that the hot drink was determined to have. This can go on until the law is hidden somewhere behind all the fences and condemnatory walls that have been put up. Having fences is alright if one needs them to keep the law, but we cannot judge another’s righteousness based on the fences we might personally need. To maintain their perceived righteousness the Pharisees would build new fences around scriptural laws that **even they couldn’t keep**, exacting judgments as well as punishments for breaking no law of God as they **taught for doctrines the traditions and commandments of men**.

The typical fences of Jewish law is easily seen in the ‘kosher’ restrictions. The Commandment in the Law of Moses was not to **‘seth a kid in its mothers milk’**. That means don’t boil a newborn goat in its own mother’s milk as the pagans were doing at the time in their rituals. To construct the first fence of obedience to this law, one might conclude that it would be a sin to boil any baby goat in any goat’s milk. To make sure that fence is protected it might be that a baby goat shouldn’t be boiled in any kind of milk, and then of course the next fence might be; not to boil any meat in any milk. Of course, the restriction must mean that the sin lies in the eating of meat and milk products together. But, let’s not stop there. Perchance a piece of meat might remain in or on a cooking pot, another fence that should be constructed that would demand that there be two sets of cooking utensils, one for meat products and one for milk products. To make sure the last fence is never breached the construction project continues. There still could be a chance to sin without another fence to protect the law which might be silverware and plates. Two sets are needed for obedience; one set is purchased and used exclusively for milk products and another set for meat. Not wanting to offend God in ‘seething a kid in it’s mother’s milk’ one should then have two dishwashers in the event of cross contamination, and that could be expanded to two refrigerators for the same reasons. It doesn’t end yet as your stomach is a processing machine of food, therefore, there must be an established time period between eating meat products and milk products. Once again it is not a sin to have a fence if you need one, but it is a sin to judge another person’s righteousness based on the fences you might need.

God sets the marks we call commandments knowing that all will miss them. For there is ‘none righteous, no not one’ (**Romans 3:10**) says Christ, explaining that ‘there is none good but God’ (**Luke 18:19; Romans 3:12**). Isaiah makes the comment that ‘in all of our righteousness we are as filthy rags’ before God (**Isaiah 64:6**). King Benjamin pounds the pulpit trying to get the people to ‘retain in remembrance our own nothingness before God’ (**Mosiah 4:5, 11**) as Helaman parallels the righteousness of humanity with the ‘dust of the earth’ (**Helaman 12:7**) explaining that even **the rocks are more obedient to God than mankind**. Mormon explains that we will eventually see who we really are compared to God, as he explains that we will see ‘our nakedness and the glory of God’ which will cause us to shrink from His presence (**Mormon 9:4-5**). These marks or targets to which we are to *aim*, are called “commandments” found in the scriptures. Commandments are

not given so that God has a reason to administer a punishment, but commandments are the targets to which we should aim for the creation of a godly character. Commandments are for our spiritual progression and character change not for God's prime time enjoyment.

We some times have **Zoramite tendencies** thinking we're special because of our membership in the true church, but "God is no respecter of persons" (D&C 1:35) and He doesn't love Members of the Church any more than anyone else, He just expects more from them. 'Where much is given much is expected' and those 'who sin against the greater light receive the greater condemnation' (D&C 82:3). God only offers his covenants to those with the active faith to change their character (**Alma 42:24; 2 Nephi 30:2**).

We often like to add, correct, or explain what God really means or meant to say about the targets and the misguided aim of others while commanded not to judge others unrighteously. It should be understood that commandments are not restrictions, but recipes for happiness. A loving Father in Heaven has given humanity guidelines (commandments) for happiness and joy in this life and in the life to come. Paul taught that commandments are given as "marks" or targets to which to aim, and to know when and what we need to change (Romans 7:78-11)

When Christ was asked which commandment was the greatest of all He stated that the greatest commandment (recipe for happiness) is to love God with all we have and are and the second like unto the first to love our fellow man. The Savior then stated that upon these two commandments hang 'all the law and the prophets' (**Matthew 22:36-40**) meaning that all of the laws and commandments that are given by God, and everything that any and every prophet teaches or declares is for the purpose of creating a character in an individual that loves God and loves their fellow man, 'for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law' (**Romans 13:8**). Every commandment we should keep is a single ingredient for a simple recipe for eternal happiness. Commandments are targets to which we are to aim in order to develop a character filled with the pure love of Christ. A character that "is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (**Moroni 7:45**).

If all commandments "hang" upon these two commandments then all judgement must hang upon the same two also. The commandments (targets) instruct us by helping us to know **when our aim is mis-directed**. Paul and Moroni add, that when we are obedient in keeping the commandments, and yet miss the mark of the character change of a pure love of Christ, we have failed in all the bulls-eyes of our obedience. There is no ordinance preformed by any priesthood authority, that has any power to save an individual. The power of every ordinance that will create the reality of the blessing of that ordinance lies in the agency of the individual. Being baptized a thousand times or participating in their own endowment or initiatory hundreds of times, means nothing and has no power to bless them without the change of character initiated by agency and choice. However, if a person is true and faithful in their obedience manifested in their change of their character, the time will come that they will realize the reality and fullness of the ordinance and blessing. This **life is a probationary state** which would mean that anything that would distract us from developing the character that loves God and our fellow man would be the definition of sin.

When the woman was taken in the act of adultery, she was brought to Christ by the self-righteous accusers to test His mercy and judgment against the law of Moses. He responded by stating (as was the law) ‘let him that is without sin cast the first stone’. He stooped and wrote in the sand, and then looking up the Savior asked the woman ‘where are thine accusers?’ In the absence of the faultfinders she said, ‘there are none’. Christ responded by saying: ‘neither do I condemn thee, go thy way and sin no more’ (John 8:1-11).

Christ was law giver that carved with His finger the commandment into the solid stone of Sinai, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ and then commanded in Leviticus that the adulterous should be stoned, said to the woman: “Neither do I condemn thee”. Christ could not condemn her for using the agency she had been guaranteed in the pre-earth life. God cast a third part of spirits out of heaven because **they sought to take away the spirit’s ability to miss the mark by choice**. Satan’s plan was to make sure **no one could sin**; that not one soul would be lost. The Father’s plan was to make sure everyone could sin if they chose. Joseph Smith said that **‘Satan could not and God will not control the agency of mankind’**. Christ said to the woman, that He would not condemn her, but if she wanted joy, she should try to live without missing the mark any more. Exalting character development is in *trying to hit the mark* (even in failure) which is the word for repentance.

God and his nature, is the mark we are to seek (Matt. 5:48, see also Jn. 14:1-6), and by choice many will miss that mark of the presence of God. We do not sin against God in the choices we make and the character we develop, we sin against ourselves. We keep ourselves from the mark of the presence of God. To be forgiven by someone we must sin against or offend that person. To be forgiven by God we must sin against God. But, do we really sin against God when he has placed us on this earth and then made sure that we have our agency to do and act as we chose? A parent cannot give a child the agency to choose freely, provide them with multiple choices, ensuring that they have intellectually ability to choose and understand the consequences of each choice, setting them free, and then condemn them for making an unwise choice. We have the ability and the freedom to ‘choose liberty and eternal life or choose captivity and death’.

2 Nephi 2:27

27. Wherefore, *men are free according to the flesh*; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are *free to choose liberty and eternal life*, through the great Mediator of all men, *or to choose captivity and death*, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for *he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself*.

Moses 7:32-33

32. The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, *gave I unto man his agency*;

33. And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, *that they should love one another, and that they should choose me*, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood;

Satan seeks the ‘misery of all men’, which misery is not necessarily experienced in mortality, but in the next life. It is a misery that comes from knowing we are unworthy to be in the presence of God, not the condemnation.

TPJS 310

The righteous and the wicked all go to the same world of spirits until the resurrection...

The great misery of departed spirits in the world of spirits, where they go after death, is to know that they come short of the glory that others enjoy and that they might have enjoyed themselves, and *they are their own accusers*.

A loving God has provided everything we need to come back to his presence and become like him, but we make the choice. This is one reason every sin will be forgiven, because it is our choice to miss the mark, our sin against ourselves, our choice not to be redeemed. There is nothing you can do that will make God love you more, likewise, there is nothing you can do that will make God love you less. However, there are things that we can do and think that will make us love God more or less, and likewise, things we can do and think that will help us increase and strengthen the love we have for God.

The only way we can sin against God is when we sin against the Holy Ghost which testifies of the Godhead. We sin against God when we ‘blaspheme’ against His power after having received his power and been made partakers of redemption (D&C 76:31-38). This unpardonable sin is limited to those who are assured of his redemptive power, receiving a justification and manifestation of their calling and election made sure by the power of the Holy Ghost. When the Holy Spirit bears witness to spirit it is more real and binding than a vision of deity (Matthew 12:32).

D&C 76:31-38

31. Thus saith the Lord concerning all those *who know my power, and have been made partakers thereof*, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy my power—

32. They are they who are the sons of perdition, of whom I say that it had been better for them never to have been born;

33. For they are vessels of wrath, doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels in eternity;

34. Concerning whom I have said there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come—

35. Having denied the Holy Spirit after having received it, and having denied the Only Begotten Son of the Father, having crucified him unto themselves and put him to an open shame.

36. These are they who shall go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels—

37. And the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power;

38. Yea, verily, the only ones who shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord, after the sufferings of his wrath.

Judgment

When we know and understand the law, breaking a commandment is to sin against ourselves. We choose to ‘miss the mark’ of our potentials, of our eternal happiness, the presence of God, eternal families, but it is not a sin against God. The breaking of a commandment is a choice to deny ourselves the potential character required for exaltation. Yes, God wants us to be as happy as we can be (that potential is exaltation), even though our happiness and salvation, through the atonement and resurrection of Christ is prepared by Him, and our exaltation may be because of Him, that exaltation it is not up to Him, **He is bound only by our obedience**. The choice to dwell in His presence in exaltation is our choice as an individual, and our **confidence will wax strong in His presence**, or **we will shrink in shame from His glory**. Life is a ‘probationary state, a time to repent (change character) and serve God,’ (Alma 42:4) a time to make choices (with a knowledge of the Gospel), to develop the character required for exaltation. This life is not a time to fear the punishment administered by a vengeful God because of our imperfections, but in joy we come unto Christ in order to **turn our weakness into strengths**. This is seen in the proclamation that those that die without the law are not judged by the law, for where there is no law there is no punishment (2 Nephi 2:13; 2 Nephi 9:25; Alma 42:17). We should fear ourselves, our flesh, our ignorance in such a way that instills a broken heart and contrite spirit the will exercise faith unto repentance (Alma 34:15-17). Helaman explains that we are the judges of ourselves because we choose to be who we want to be and obviously, where we want to be.

Helaman 14:29-30

29. And this to the intent that whosoever will believe might be saved, and that whosoever will not believe, a righteous judgment might come upon them; and also *if they are condemned they bring upon themselves their own condemnation*.

30. And now remember, remember, my brethren, that *whosoever perisheth, perisheth unto himself; and whosoever doeth iniquity, doeth it unto himself; for behold, ye are free; ye are permitted to act for yourselves; for behold, God hath given unto you a knowledge and he hath made you free*.

The “justice” of God is not the gavel of a merciless judge behind the bench meeting out punishment and sentences for broken laws and commandments. The ‘justice’ of God described in scripture, is that ‘no unclean thing can be in the presence of God’. This sounds too simple to be true, but in its simplicity, it is true in scripture.

Alma 11:37

37. And I say unto you again that he cannot save them in their sins; for I cannot deny his word, and he hath said that *no unclean thing can inherit the kingdom of heaven*; therefore, how can ye be saved, except ye inherit the kingdom of heaven? Therefore, ye cannot be saved in your sins

Twice the scriptures state that ‘God cannot deny himself’ (2 Timothy 2:13; Mosiah 15:27) meaning that He cannot deny who He is or “turn off” or “dial down” His glory so that the impure, unrepentant and unclean characters are able to endure His presence. He cannot deny Himself or His glory, and to do so **mercy would rob justice and God would cease to be God**. Our Father in Heaven has done everything provided everything we need to ‘become sons and

daughter of God, and He wants us to be with him, but we have to “*be able*” to dwell with him. None are rejected by Him, for “whosoever will may walk therein and be saved” (Alma 41:8).

Helaman 3:27-28

27. Thus we may see that the Lord is merciful unto all who will, in the sincerity of their hearts, call upon his holy name.

28. Yea, thus we see that the gate of heaven is open unto all, even to those who will believe on the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.

We judge ourselves, God does not say ‘you, you and you are going to the terrestrial kingdom and you over there are going to the telestial kingdom while you on that side of the room are going to the celestial kingdom’. Like this life, in the spirit world we will gravitate to the type of people and spirits with which we feel comfortable; people with the same character that we have. Hell is where we don’t belong and heaven is where we do. It would be hell to dwell with God if we are unworthy to be with him, not by his judgment, but by our naked guilt. A perfect heaven for some will be in the telestial or terrestrial kingdoms. We will ‘see our nakedness and the glory of God’ and know who we really are compared to God.

Mormon 9:3-5

3. Then will ye longer deny the Christ, or can ye behold the Lamb of God? Do ye suppose that ye shall dwell with him under a consciousness of your guilt? Do ye suppose that ye could be happy to dwell with that holy Being, when your souls are racked with a consciousness of guilt that ye have ever abused his laws?

4. Behold, I say unto you that ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell.

5. For behold, when *ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ*, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire upon you

All will choose the glory and place where they will be most comfortable for eternity. All will be taught the Gospel in the Spirit World and all must, and will understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ perfectly, a perfect understanding. All of us, everyone, will choose to embrace the Gospel exercising faith unto repentance (character change) or choose to remain as we are, satisfied with the nature and character we have desired, chosen and developed for ourselves.

Without a perfect knowledge, agency cannot function properly. Any judgment we may make on ourselves or by God without a perfect understanding of all aspects of the plan and gospel of salvation would compromise our agency and every judgment would be unjust. For this reason Alma taught that it is necessary and requisite that there be space between death and the resurrection. We know that the spirit world is part of this probationary state by the testimony of Temples and our work for the dead. This ‘necessary’ time in the spirit world is to learn and understand the Atonement, the Gospel and Plan of Salvation perfectly without any misunderstanding or misconceptions so that agency will remain uncompromised and all judgments made by man or God will be just.

We worry about children, relatives and friends that have fallen away from the Church and fear their condemnation in the next life, but the spirit world exists to make sure a perfect understanding is achieved. Only with a perfect understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ can any judgment be made. It is not a timed test. All will become the person they desire to be with a full and perfect knowledge and total acceptance, receiving a fullness of the degree of glory and happiness which we have chosen. We will be resurrected to the glory for which we have prepared and desired, not as a judgment from God. This is described in D&C 88.

D&C 88:21-23; 28-31

21 And they who are not sanctified through the law which I have given unto you, even the law of Christ, must inherit another kingdom, even that of a terrestrial kingdom, or that of a telestial kingdom.

22 For he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.

23 And he who cannot abide the law of a terrestrial kingdom cannot abide a terrestrial glory.

28 They who are of a celestial spirit shall receive the same body which was a natural body; even ye shall receive your bodies, and your glory shall be that glory by which your bodies are quickened.

29 Ye who are quickened by a portion of the celestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

30 And they who are quickened by a portion of the terrestrial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

31 And also they who are quickened by a portion of the telestial glory shall then receive of the same, even a fulness.

Alma explains that in the spirit world our happiness or misery, in paradise or prison, will last only until the resurrection:

Alma 40:14,

14 Now this is the state of the souls of the wicked, yea, in darkness, and a state of awful, fearful looking for the fiery indignation of the wrath of God upon them; thus they remain in this state, as well as the righteous in paradise, *until the time of their resurrection.*

21 But whether it be at his resurrection or after, I do not say; but this much I say, that there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body, and *a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth*, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works.

The Lord explains “that surely every man must repent or suffer, for I, God, am endless.” (D&C 19:4, 15-16).

15 ... and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

16 For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the pain and suffering of a bright recollection of all our guilt will be exquisite because of personal remorse rather than an executed sentence.

TPJS 357

A man is his own tormenter and his own condemner. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone. I say, so is the torment of man.

It is in the spirit world that we suffer for the deeds done in the body, not a kingdom of glory. A memory of our wickedness and loss is not eternal, as the Lord explains to Joseph Smith.

D&C 19

6 Nevertheless, *it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment*, but it is written endless torment.

7 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.

All will know that agency reigns supreme and everyone will be as happy as they can be and receive the fullness of joy for which they have prepared and chosen for themselves. The Lord explains through Isaiah that the time will come that this life will pass into forgotten history as our toddler years are unnecessary for us to remember today. Speaking of the time after the resurrection, Isaiah records: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." (Isa. 65:17).

If a perfect understanding is not achieved before any judgment is made (by God or by ourselves) then agency was compromised. **There is no sin or 'missing the mark' in the spirit world (JS)**. The character targets will be clear. We will arrive into the spirit world without a body and it's weaknesses. We will have the same 'spirit' (character) that we had on earth, the characters and natures that we created (**Alma 34:34**). All will be taught and obtain a perfect knowledge of the Gospel and Plan of Salvation, some will choose to change because of faith and repentance and others will be satisfied to remain they way they are. Salvation is not a timed test but one of perfect understanding and choice. Agency is compromised without a perfect understanding. Nobody knows the Gospel and Plan of Salvation perfectly in mortality. Children who fall away in this life from the truths of the Gospel that they were taught by faithful parents, will not be locked out of learning opportunities by a loving God. All spirits must and will be taught the truths of eternity and only when a perfect knowledge of plan of salvation, the atonement and their potentials are realized and understood will they choose *where and who* they want to be for eternity. The spirit world is part of this probationary state of learning and change. All agency is compromised until a perfect knowledge of the Gospel and the eternal potentials are understood. If this were not the case the work for the dead us useless. Likewise, one must perfectly understand and comprehend the consequence of choice and the price of the rejection of God and

His mercy, for agency to be free. **God cannot control, nor will He exercise compulsion upon any of the children of men (JS) or His authority as God would cease.**

Again, we don't sin against God, we chose to miss the mark of becoming like God. **Joseph Smith stated that 'we cannot dwell with God until we have the character of God'**. Submitting our will to God's will is only the beginning. To dwell with God, our will must become the same as God's will.

Almost any parent of wayward children will love them no matter what they may do. Cannot a parent forgive and love their children for the choices they make even though they may not like those choices. The door to a righteous home is always open, but there are some rules and activities that will not be tolerated, and other blessings that might be enjoyed there. In a righteous home there will be prayers, discussions about religion and God. All are welcome, but none are compelled, **as for me and my house we will worship the Lord**, and a loving parent might understand that they cannot deny themselves or their testimony.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the absolution of consequence for an offense, and the real and eternal consequence of sin is not being in the presence of God, or able to endure the presence of God. This consequence is annulled if we exercise faith unto repentance, faith in Christ and the Atonement and because of that faith begin the process of changing our character. It's not the single sin or sinful act that induces the consequence, unrepentant sin develops a character because of our agency and desires that entropically morph into rebellion. Ultimately any rebellion against God and the targets He has set is rebellion against ourselves and our happiness.

Moses in his weaknesses, was able to stand in the presence of god, **protected by transfiguration**. Enoch, his people, as Elijah, John the beloved and the three Nephites are protected from the temporal entropy and death by their translation. Christ's sacrifice will provide the protection from the eternal burnings of God glory, if we are changing our character through **faith unto repentance**. Christ provides the *time and protection* for an eternal and incorruptible body along with our repentant minds and hearts to change, (this is 'mercy'). Eventually our will and nature may become the same as God's through our agency and the mediator and Savior provides to all humanity the **power to become the sons and daughters of God**. Offering a **power of resurrection by the power of the Atonement** so that we (our body heart mind) has the hope and faith to begin the process of change as **our will becomes the same as God's will** and we are not only able to endure and dwell with him, but become like him **receiving a fullness of light and truth**. **God cannot deny himself** or his glory, He cannot turn it down or shut it off because of his love and kindness, or he would cease to be God. This is why **mercy cannot rob justice**. But we do need a Savior to **satisfy the demands of Justice** to protect us from the glory of **light and truth**. This protection is called "mercy" and is only available for those who are seeking to make the character change required to become like God. We choose our **words, works and thoughts**, and God will not condemn us for that choice as we **are judges of our own selves**. There are people today in the church that think and believe that a loving god will not cast them out of his presence and the fellowship of righteous families who are there, just because of their wrong choices and acts. And they are right God will not, but we will. Its not the acts of sin that condemns, it's the

rebellion initiated by our character, our heart and mind that will adjudicate us to the consequences and absence of the presence of God.

We are imperfect and God knows it, and expects it. He does not get angry or mad because of our imperfections. He knows that we cannot be perfect in this life for Christ has explained there are **none good but God no righteous no not one**, and in all **our righteousness we are no better than filthy rags**. For those that miss the mark because they **know no law** is one thing but **'wo unto them that have the law'** for those that have and **know the law and doeth it not to him it is a sin**. To those that have and know the mark and are not striving to hit the mark by taking aim again and again, it is a sin.

We will receive an **incorruptible body** at the resurrection, but our minds, and our hearts (or in other words) our character **will remain the same because of restoration**, the justice of God is that no unclean thing can be in the presence of God (Alma 11:37). When Adam partook of the forbidden fruit he did not sin against God because he knew the command and the consequence. He was given the **freedom to choose and the power** to put his agency into action. Having the power to act and the agency to choose coupled with knowing the law and consequence, Adam and Eve transgressed against themselves, against all that was prepared for them and their happiness, they rejected the Garden of Eden and the presence of God by their choice and knowledge, **unable to remain with God**. The first parents could no longer remain immortal, they consigned themselves to sorrow and death in a lone and dreary world. **They chose to separate themselves from God** and begin a never-ending temporal fight with their flesh and ignorance in the battle to return to immortality (grace) and the presence of a loving Father in Heaven. **Adam and Eve learned and taught their posterity that the desired return and relationship with their God could only be accomplished with the help of a Savior (Moses 6:51-68) through faith unto repentance.**

God knows the **end from the beginning** and knew that Adam and Eve and all their posterity, but one, would fall separating themselves from his glory and presence. Therefore, a **Savior was prepared** and a **Gospel plan initiated** to help us change our character and prepare for the glories of eternity that we desire. Like Adam, we have the same power to act and the same agency of choice, we have the commandments (recipes of happiness) and we know the consequences. When we offend the law and the prophets by choice and knowledge, we are sinning against ourselves not against God. When we do this, we are then rejecting the presence of God and rejecting the happiness that God has prepared for us. This is our choice and right.

God knew that with a physical body and the ignorance of the mind we would fall from the ability to endure his presence, as did Adam. The Gods prepared prophets and **righteous fathers** to give us the word of God through the scriptures that contain the plan of salvation, the commandment and laws (ordinances) to give us the direction we need to receive **that eternal happiness prepared** for us. There are many **mansions in the kingdom of God and there are different places or levels prepared** for the many choices that will be made. An open rebellion against the Gospel is a rejection against the plan of happiness which is made by our own choice and agency, and that agency God 'will not' control. 'How canst thou weep' cried Enoch; God may **weep because of our rejection but does so because mankind must reap the consequence of rejecting their God and**

creator. Mercy cannot rob justice. God will not punish us for that rejection, the consequence of that rejection is a choice we make.