

9 The Barriers to Exaltation

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Within the pages of The Book of Mormon at least nine (9) different “barriers to exaltation” are found. These are natural and emotional barriers that separate humanity from God and His presence. These barriers often contribute to the cause (hence the word ‘barriers’) of inactivity, or a falling away from an active life in the church and gospel. Apostasy on the other hand is a complete rejection of doctrine, faith or belief. Often, a complete rejection of the truth and of the church will turn into an *aggressive apostasy*. Aggressive apostates are not satisfied with being inactive, finding a faith in another religion, nor in just having their names removed from the records of the church. Aggressive apostates must attack and destroy the faith of others, and their first targets are usually family members. Why does this aggression exist? Why does it turn into a hatred of history and doctrine? Why is this hatred (by both apostate Mormons and non-Mormons) directed more specifically against Mormonism than against any other faith? What would cause someone to have a spirit that seeks to destroy?

Curiously, the vitriol seems reserved almost exclusively for the Latter-day Saints. Why not attack other Christian churches or non-Christian faiths like Hindu, Islam, Judaism or Buddhism? Would there not be non-conciliatory issues of doctrine, history and leadership statements within these other faiths? Though most apostates of the Church deem it inappropriate to attack the beliefs, faith and doctrine of other religions, they feel no such restraint when it comes to attacking the faith of loved ones. In essence, apostates attack the organization and family unit that made them the people they are. The big question is: Why can't they just leave it alone? If one doesn't believe in the LDS faith, doctrine and principles, why is it so hard to simply walk away?

The scriptures teach us that conflict and contention is of the devil and does not come of God. An LDS fundamental belief is that of *agency*, the ability and freedom to choose one's belief. The good Christian and a true disciple of Christ will not devote time or energy trying to destroy another person's faith in Christ. So why do the malcontents persist? Is it so true that misery loves company and the ego needs justification? Joseph Smith made an interesting observation about apostasy:

The Messiah's kingdom on earth is of that kind of government, that there has always been numerous apostates,....Strange as it may appear at first thought, yet it is no less strange than true, that notwithstanding all the professed determination to live godly, *apostates after turning from the faith of Christ, unless they have speedily repented, have sooner or later fallen into the snares of the wicked one, and have been left destitute of the Spirit of God*, to manifest their wickedness in the eyes of multitudes. From apostates, the faithful have received the severest persecutions. Judas was rebuked and immediately betrayed his Lord into the hands of His enemies, because Satan entered into him. There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the gospel with full purpose of heart, which, if sinned against, the apostate is left naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing, and his end is to be burned. *When once that light which was in them is taken from them, they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors.*

What nearer friend on earth, or in heaven, had Judas than the Savior? And his first object was to destroy Him.... *From what source emanated the principle which has ever been manifest by apostates from the true Church to persecute with double diligence, and seek with double perseverance, to destroy those whom they once professed to love, with whom they once communed, and with whom they once covenanted to strive with every power in righteousness to obtain the rest of God? Perhaps our brethren will say the same that caused Satan to seek to overthrow the kingdom of God, because he himself was evil, and God's kingdom is holy.* (TPJS, p.66. Italics added for emphasis)

What seems clear: When the spirit and testimony of truth is rejected, the heavens withdraw, and when left unto themselves a person will “kick against the pricks, persecute the saints and fight against God.”

The Nine Barriers

Before one can begin to repair the rejection of the faith and testimony of a loved one, the reason for the falling away must first be determined.

There are nine barriers to exaltation that are specifically addressed in the Book of Mormon. Some of these barriers are natural events that have separated man from God. Others are based on the pride of mankind, while the last three *Guilt*, *Willfulness* and *Uncertainty / Ignorance* seem to rise to the top as elements that may cause a willful inactivity and falling away. These three will be discussed in detail following a brief explanation of the first six elements.

1. The Fall

2 Nephi 9:6, The separation between man and God as a result of the First parents partaking of the forbidden fruit.

2. Physical Distance (between Heaven & Earth)

Alma 5:33-35 John 14:21,23, The distance or physical separation between this lone and dreary temporal world and the world of the Gods.

3. Pride and Vanity

3 Nephi 6:15, Pride and vanity is the sin of the Book of Mormon that became a catalyst, leading to destruction.

4. Weaknesses of the Flesh

2 Nephi 2:29, Galatians 5:16, The flesh and the 'evil therein' that causes man to seek the satisfaction of his desires, appetites and passions.

5. The Cares of the World

3 Nephi 13:25, Many are consumed by the concern about being accepted of the world and the supposed securities of a temporal life.

6. The Deceitfulness of Riches

Mormon 8:38-39, Men trust in Mammon and the wealth that provides a supposed happiness and security.

7. Guilt

8. Willfulness

9. Uncertainty / Ignorance

Guilt results from understanding the doctrines of truth and righteousness and then acting in opposition to what you know is right.

17 Now, how could a man repent except he should sin? How could he sin if there was no law? How could there be a law save there was a punishment?

18 Now, there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, *which brought remorse of conscience unto man.* (Alma 42:17-18)

Without knowledge of right and wrong there can be no guilt or remorse for thoughts or actions. Guilt and remorse, like pain, may be useful and corrective.

22 But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

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 men back 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. (Alma 42:22-23)

Guilt is good the same way that pain is good. If humans did not feel pain most would die an early death. A person with appendicitis who felt no pain would just suddenly die. Pain is the body's way of signaling when something is wrong with the workings of the physical body. In the same way, guilt was built into man so that he would be able to know when he needs spiritual correction. When Adam was created, the Lord pronounced him to be “very good.” After the primal father did something he had been commanded not to do, Adam tried to hide from God, indicating that he felt guilt. This single passage in Genesis reveals that guilt or remorse was placed in him by God. Unfortunately, the discomfort and shame that accompanies guilt may keep some from participating in church activities and meetings.

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. (Mormon 9:3-4)

Remember, Hell is where you don't belong (and that could be the Celestial Kingdom), but a *bright recollection of guilt* will cause one to shrink away from God, creating an eternal separation from those unlike themselves.

Willfulness is open rebellion. To knowingly sin without any conscious feelings of guilt or remorse is open and willful rebellion. Many choose to participate in a lifestyle that is contrary to that outlined by scripture and commandment. Essentially, the desire to live this lifestyle is greater than their commitment to gospel principles. In order to minimize the chance of feeling guilt, they often remove themselves from any environment that would place moral restrictions—real or imagined—on their actions. The person who does not want to change or does not have a desire to believe in

truths that will inspire this change will continue to rebel and resist reform. The choice is always theirs.

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.*

31 *He hath given unto you that ye might know good from evil, and he hath given unto you that ye might choose life or death; and ye can do good and be restored unto that which is good, or have that which is good restored unto you; or ye can do evil, and have that which is evil restored unto you.* (Helaman 14:29-31)

The desire to sin without guilt is nothing more than the degradation of human potential to that of an animal. Being acted upon by the environment reduces a godlike nature to that of animal instinct. That which separates man from the animal kingdom is the ability to “act in futurity.” This is the ability to make a decision or perform an action in view of a reward or punishment that will not take place until after death. To ‘act in futurity’ requires one to realize that reality exists only in the realm of the sacred, and to acknowledge an accountability to God that transcends this life.

Those who willfully rebel often question the standards of Mormonism as a way of justifying their inactivity and lack of participation in the Church. The willful maverick is generally not an aggressive apostate, just one who doesn’t want to be found in the LDS record system. They don’t want to participate or to be active because that would require them to change their lifestyle in a way they are not yet willing to do.

Uncertainty / Ignorance is the barrier that is seen in those who just don’t know or understand the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes this is because of family traditions, interpretations and opinions with which they have grown up. When confronted with challenges to their beliefs, these are they who want to know something but don’t know how or where to find the answers. They often don’t understand how to view what has been presented to them and after consulting the Internet, they feel lost in the whirlpool of anti-Mormon websites and teachings. These members are usually sincere in their desire to know more and they are the easiest to teach light and truth to once they begin to seek for it. Many will have what the scriptures call a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” which is the Lord’s requirement of a personal spiritual preparation necessary for learning light and truth.

A cardinal rule of teaching, in or out of the Church, is that it is virtually impossible to teach those who do not want to know. Seeking further light and truth requires a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Before learning can take place, one has to come to an honest recognition of one’s ignorance. This recognition of the need for further light and truth is the first step to spiritual enlightenment. Nevertheless, some people will *fanatically* choose to remain uncertain or ignorant, verifying the missing beatitude: “Blessed are the ignorant in thinking they know everything.” A fanatic was aptly defined by Winston Churchill as “one who will not change their mind and will not change the subject.” It has been said that: it’s not what you don’t know that gets one in trouble, it’s *what one knows for sure, that isn’t true* that causes the problems.

Guilt, Willfulness and Ignorance are often the main elements that lead to inactivity. Most of the falling away today is because of ignorance and the lack of an understanding of the responsibilities of the priesthood and the purpose for the organization of the Church. To blame God, the priesthood or the church for a lack of spiritual experiences is an overt manifestation of one's ignorance of scripture and doctrine. There is always only one to blame for the lack of a relationship with Christ and the Atonement. Guilt is the byproduct of the willful sins of the flesh, while ignorance coupled with tradition and opinion can cause many to be led astray. As simple as it seems to correct, ignorance lies at the cause of many who are falling away from the church. As the old saying goes: 'Samson slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, and many a testimony has been slain the same way.'