

## **Only Repentance Can Relieve Suffering**

"Love One Another" General Conference Address

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Good Morning Brothers and Sisters.

I am happy to be with you all today under such pleasurable circumstances. We owe our gratitude to many who have lent their talents and resources to organizing and carrying out this conference, Thank you all.

I must tell you, I enjoy living in relative obscurity. I have no notoriety, I have no readership. I am the least of your Brethren. For Heaven's Sake I don't even have a blog! I view myself as Nephi viewed himself—a wretched man—angry because of being so easily beset by sin. But also like Nephi, I know in whom I have trusted. I know something of our Lord and He knows everything about me. I know that it is futile to argue with Him. I was really apprehensive about speaking today but when I remembered the love and mercy that had been extended to me; I found just enough courage and confidence to be standing here now. I also saw clearly an opportunity to do as the Lord had taught in His Sermon at Bountiful:

"...And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and to him that would borrow of thee, turn thou not away. (3 Nephi 5:30)

On Sunday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017, I sat with a few hundred other people in the Egyptian theater in Boise, Idaho and listened as the servant David read the words of a prayer. The words of the prayer had been received through revelation in the early part of July, 2017, nearly two months previous to our gathering in Boise, and I imagine were offered up to Heaven at that time. The prayer was offered up with acknowledgements, confessions of weakness, and pleadings to God that He would consider establishing His covenant with a new group of people. I want to share only three paragraphs from that prayer:

"Heavenly Father, it is I whom you named David, asking you in the name of Jesus Christ for your mercy and grace to be with those of us who seek to become your people. We hope to repent and return to your path, and no longer be condemned and rejected as a people because of those who went before. Take pity on us all and have mercy for us, as we acknowledge and accept the condemnation and rejection of the latter-day gentiles, and petition that we may overcome it." T&C 156:1

"As you began to roll forth a restoration through Joseph and others, we ask you to now continue that work and to allow your revelations, work, covenant, and blessings to roll forth with us, and things kept hidden be uncovered, and a fullness be given to us as a people. It is written that those who will not harden their hearts will receive a greater portion of your word, until they know the mysteries of God in full. It is also written that those who will harden their hearts will receive a lesser portion of your word, until they know nothing concerning the mysteries of God. We seek to leave behind a hard heart, and to be open to receiving a greater portion of your word, and to know of your mysteries, and obtain your grace for us as a people, that we may become yours." (T&C 156:14)

“O Lord, remove our blindness, forgive our sins and weaknesses, give to us a new heart that we may become children of the Most High God. We acknowledge our unworthiness. We are descended from rebellious and wayward ancestors and know that without your mercy we will remain in an awful state, unprepared for the return of our Lord in glory. The scriptures foretell of a latter-day recovery of your people, and of natural fruit returning to your vineyard. We seek to be part of that so you may value us as yours and preserve us against the coming season of harvest.” (T&C 156:16)

I want you to know that I gratefully and unhesitatingly place myself squarely in the middle of every “we” and “us” that was uttered in that prayer, especially when confessions and acknowledgements of mistakes and even failures were made.

The Answer to the Prayer for Covenant was received within a week of the petition being made, on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Heaven responded to The Prayer for Covenant in a familiar manner —liberally and without upbraiding— certainly with reproof. I think it is important for us to remember that The Prayer puts the words of the Answer in their proper context. The Prayer and the Answer will serve one best when considered together. It is true that many of the precepts, teachings and principles contained within the Answer can stand independent, but I think the connection and the context is important. Use T&C sections 156 (The Prayer for Covenant) and 157 (Answer to the Prayer for Covenant) together in your studying. There is a reason why both must be heard to receive the Covenant.

As I sat and participated in that historic gathering in Boise, Idaho on that beautiful Sunday in September, 2017, I heard and saw things that I can only assume others heard and saw. I saw three men and a woman in turn, standing before us and speaking but I heard a single voice as they each spoke. The words they were speaking were not their own. When the words of the Covenant were spoken I continued to hear that same voice. I also saw the countenance of the man speaking the words of the Covenant change and I saw another image in the man’s face. This is precisely what Alma was inquiring about when he asked the questions:

“And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? *Have ye received his image in your own countenances?* Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts? Do ye exercise faith in the redemption of him who created you? Do you look forward with an eye of faith and view this mortal body raised in immortality, and this corruption raised in incorruption? To stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body? I say unto you, can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord saying unto you in that day, Come unto me, ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth — or do ye imagine to yourselves that ye can lie unto the Lord at that day and say, Lord, our works have been righteous works upon the face of the earth — and that he will save you? Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God? I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? *I say unto you, can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances?* I say unto you, can ye think of being saved when you have yielded yourselves to become subjects to the Devil? I say unto you, ye will know at that day that ye cannot be saved; for there can no man be

saved except his garments are washed white. Yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our fathers, who should come to redeem his people from their sins. (Alma 3:3)

I tell you, the Lord was, in very deed, in Boise, Idaho that day.

The need for repentance cannot be overstated. It is a continuing requirement upon which any success in the Covenant rests. Repentance was, is and will continue to be necessary because we continue to sin, act in iniquity, make mistakes and misunderstand or disregard the counsel of the Lord. Sin and iniquity lead without exception to suffering, both in body and spirit. Forgiveness can be obtained by no other means than repentance, and our Lord's forgiveness is the only remedy for the spiritual suffering associated with our sin and iniquity. There is no other way to avoid this miserable suffering.

Our Lord declared:

"Wherefore, I command you by my name, and by my almighty power that you repent, repent lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore — how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all that they might not suffer, if they would repent. But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I, which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup and shrink. Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.

Wherefore, I command you again by my almighty power that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time when I withdrew my spirit." (T&C 4:5-6)

The Lord said, "But if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I..." Make no mistake, He means precisely what He said. So, what kind of suffering is the unrepentant character to look forward to? We have in our scriptures, T&C 161, a marvelous account of the suffering associated with the atoning sacrifice of the Lord. I want to read a good portion of that to you:

"I knew a man in Christ about four years ago who, being overshadowed by the spirit on the 26th of February, 2005, had the Lord appear to him again. And the Lord spoke to him face to face in plain humility, as one man speaks to another, calling him by name. As they spoke the Lord put forth His hand and touched the eyes of the man and said, Look! The man had opened before him a view of the Lord kneeling in prayer. It was in a dark place. The air was heavy and overcast with sorrow. The man beheld the Lord praying in Gethsemene on the night of His betrayal and before His crucifixion.

All the Lord had previously done in His mortal ministry by healing the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf, curing the leper, and ministering relief to others as he taught was but a prelude to what the Lord was now to do on this dark, oppressive night.

As the Lord knelt in prayer, His vicarious suffering began. He was overcome by pain and anguish. He felt within Him, not just the pains of sin, but also the illnesses men suffer as a result of the Fall and their foolish and evil choices. The suffering was long and the challenge difficult. The Lord suffered the afflictions. He was healed from the sickness. He overcame the pains, and patiently bore the infirmities until, finally, he returned to peace of mind and strength of body. It took an act of will and hope for Him to overcome the affliction which had been poured upon Him. He overcame the separation caused by these afflictions and reconciled with His Father. He was at peace with all mankind.

He thought His sufferings were over, but to His astonishment another wave overcame Him. This one was much greater than the first. The Lord, who had been kneeling, fell forward onto His hands at the impact of the pain that was part of a greater, second wave.

This second wave was so much greater than the first that it seemed to entirely overcome the Lord. The Lord was now stricken with physical injuries as well as spiritual affliction. As he suffered anew, His flesh was torn which he healed using the power of the charity within Him. The Lord had such life within Him, such power and virtue within Him, that although he suffered in His flesh, these injuries healed and His flesh restored. His suffering was both body and spirit, and there was anguish of thought, feeling, and soul.

The Lord overcame this second wave of suffering, and again found peace of mind and strength of body; and His heart filled with love despite what he had suffered. Indeed, it was charity or love that allowed Him to overcome. He was at peace with His Father, and with all mankind, but it required another, still greater act of will and charity than the first for Him to do so.

Again, the Lord thought His suffering was over. He stayed on His hands and knees for a moment to collect Himself when another wave of torment burst upon Him. This wave struck Him with such force he fell forward upon His face. He was afflicted by this greater wave. He was then healed, only to then be afflicted again as the waves of torment overflowed. Wave after wave poured out upon Him, with only moments between them. The Lord's suffering progressed from a lesser to a greater portion of affliction; for as one would be overcome by Him, the next, greater affliction would then be poured out. Each wave of suffering was only preparation for the next, greater wave.

The pains of mortality, disease, injury, and infirmity, together with the sufferings of sin, transgressions, guilt of mind, and unease of soul, the horrors of recognition of the evils men had inflicted upon others, were all poured out upon Him, with confusion and perplexity multiplied upon Him.

He longed for it to be over, and thought it would end long before it finally ended. With each wave he thought it would be the last, but then another came upon Him, and then yet another.

The one beholding this scene was pained by what he saw, and begged for the vision of the Lord's suffering to end. He could not bear to see his Lord suffering in this manner. The petition was denied and the vision did not end, for the Lord required him to witness it.

The man saw that the Lord pleaded again with the Father that "this cup may pass" from Him. But the Lord was determined to suffer the Father's will and not His own. Therefore, a final wave

came upon Him with such violence as to cut Him at every pore. It seemed for a moment that he was torn apart, and that blood came out of every pore. The Lord writhed in pain upon the ground as this great final torment was poured upon Him.

All virtue was taken from Him. All the great life force in Him was stricken and afflicted. All the light turned to darkness. He was humbled, drained, and left with nothing. It is not possible for a man to bear such pains and live, but with nothing more than will, hope in His Father, and charity toward all men, He emerged from the final wave of torment, knowing he had suffered all this for His Father and His brethren. By His hope and great charity, trusting in the Father, the Lord returned from this dark abyss and found grace again, His heart being filled with love toward the Father and all men.” T&C 161:1-12

This is the kind of suffering we can expect if we fail to repent and persist in sinful behavior.

We err greatly if we think that suffering only for our own sins may be tolerable because, we reason, that suffering will be infinitely less than the suffering of our Lord. Though it is true enough—our suffering would be infinitely less—we need to understand that suffering the consequences of our own sins is sufficient to tear us from pore to pore accompanied with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Let’s believe our Lord and repent of every sin, regardless of how small or irrelevant we deem them to be. After all “the least degree of allowance” would be zero!

King Benjamin in the course of administering a covenant from God to his people reminded them that there were diverse ways to sin—even too many to number:

“And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you — that is, for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God — I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants. And see that all these things are done in wisdom and order, for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength. And again, it is expedient that he should be diligent, that thereby he might win the prize. Therefore, all things must be done in order. *And I would that ye should remember that whosoever among you that borroweth of his neighbor should return the thing that he borroweth, according as he doth agree, or else thou shalt commit sin, and perhaps thou shalt cause thy neighbor to commit sin also. And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them. But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe to keep the commandments of God, and continue in the faith of what ye have heard concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember and perish not.*” (Mosiah 2:6)

Odd that something generally perceived as so trivial —returning borrowed things to your neighbor—prefaces a dire reminder of the consequences of sin. I suppose it reminds us that there is no degree of allowance when it comes to sin.

The Prayer that preceded this profound answer was an honest offer to repent and a plea for forgiveness. We were asking for a new start. I am inviting you today in fact I think the Lord is inviting us all, to make an assessment of where we stand in relation to the things the He made clear in this critical communication. The Lord spoke plainly while pointing out many of the deficiencies we were demonstrating as a people. These are only some of the things the Lord saw in us as a people and the full list is simply too lengthy to treat in the short time I have:

“... Nevertheless, people who are quarrelsome and proud are also among you, and since you seek to unite to become one people, I answer you as one. (T&C 157:1)

... As people, you lack the ability to respectfully disagree among one another. You are as Paul and Peter, whose disagreements resulted in jarring and sharp contentions... You must do better. (T&C 157:3)

...many have intended well, although they have spoken poorly. Wisdom counsels mankind to align their words with their hearts, but mankind refuses to take counsel from Wisdom. (T&C 157:4)

[We need to be careful when the Lord uses words like “men” and “mankind” because our first impulse is to deflect the problem away from ourselves. We are the “men” and we are the “mankind” the Lord is speaking about.]

... there have been sharp disputes between you that should have been avoided (T&C 157:5)

In the work you have performed there are those who have been Satan, accusing one another, wounding hearts, and causing jarring, contention, and strife by their accusations. Rather than loving one another, even among you who desire a good thing, some have dealt unkindly as if they were the opponents, accusers, and adversaries. In this they were wrong. (T&C 157:9)

... You think Satan will be bound a thousand years, and it will be so, but [you] do not understand your own duty to bind that spirit within you so that you give no heed to accuse others. It is not enough to say you love God; you must also love your fellow man. Nor is it enough to say you love your fellow man while you, as Satan, divide, contend, and dispute against any person who labors on an errand seeking to do my will. How you proceed must be as noble as the cause you seek. You have become your own adversaries, and you cannot be Satan and also be mine. Repent, therefore, like Peter and end your unkind and untrue accusations against one another, and make peace. How shall there ever come a thousand years of peace if the people who are mine do not love one another? How shall Satan be bound if there are no people of one heart and one mind? (Reference to work on recovering the scriptures generally ends here.) (T&C 157:10)

“I desire to heal you from *an awful state of blindness* so that you may see clearly my will, to do it. I promised to bring unto you much of my gospel through the Book of Mormon and to provide you with the means to obtain a fullness of my gospel, and I have done this; yet *you refuse to receive the truth, even when it is given unto you in plainness*. How can you who pursue the truth yet *remain unable to behold your own weakness before me*? (T&C 157:16)

*Unto what can I liken it, that you may understand? For you are like a man who seeks for good fruit from a neglected vineyard — unwatered, undunged, unpruned, and unattended. How shall*

*it produce good fruit if you fail to tend it? What reward does the unfaithful husbandman obtain from his neglected vineyard? How can saying you are a faithful husbandman ever produce good fruit in the vineyard without doing the work of the husbandman? For you seek my words to recover them even as you forsake to do them. You have heretofore produced wild fruit, bitter and ill-formed, because you neglect to do my words. (T&C 157:17)*

*I speak of you who have hindered my work, that claim to see plainly the beams in others' eyes. You have claimed to see plainly the error of those who abuse my words, and neglect the poor, and who have cast you out — to discern their errors, and you say you seek a better way. Yet among you are those who continue to scheme, backbite, contend, accuse, and forsake my words to do them, even while you seek to recover them. Can you not see that your works fall short of the beliefs you profess? (T&C 157:18)*

For the sake of the promises to the fathers will I labor with you as a people, and not because of you, for you have not yet become what you must be to live together in peace... Even a single soul who stirs up the hearts of others to anger can destroy the peace of all my people...(T&C 157:19)

The Book of Mormon was given as my covenant for this day and contains my gospel, which came forth to allow people to understand my work and then obtain my salvation. Yet many of you are like those who reject the Book of Mormon, because you say, but you do not do. As a people you honor with your lips, but your hearts are corrupt, filled with envy and malice, returning evil for good, sparing none — even those with pure hearts among you — from your unjustified accusations and unkind backbiting. You have not obtained the fullness of my salvation because you do not draw near to me. (T&C 157:20)

... You have all been wounded, your hearts pierced through with sorrows because of how the world has treated you. But you have also scarred one another by your unkind treatment of each other, and you do not notice your misconduct toward others because you think yourself justified in this. You bear the scars on your countenances, from the soles of your feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Your visages have been so marred that your hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies, and anger toward your fellow man bear outward witness of your inner self; you cannot hide it. When I appear to you, instead of confidence, you feel shame. You fear and withdraw from me because you bear the blood and sins of your treatment of brothers and sisters...(T&C 157:49)

...You cannot be at peace with one another [because] you take offense when none is intended. (T&C 157:58)

...Men conspire to overthrow and oppress, and use violence to control others through fear.

The earth groans under the wickedness of mankind upon her face, and she longs for peace to come. She withholds the abundance of her bounty because of the offenses of men against me, against one another, and against her.” (T&C 157:63)

So I ask, since July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 when these words were given to us. How are we doing? What does the Lord see in us now?

If this extensive list of issues was all we were left with, it would be depressing and hopeless indeed. But Heaven gives liberally and along with reproof we were given in very plain terms the remedies and course corrections that would, if hearkened to, help us become people worthy of the covenant and its associated blessings. The Lord indicated that His words were not all given as commandments. He said:

“I have given to you my doctrine, and have also revealed teachings, commandments, precepts, and principles to guide you, and it is not meet that I command you in all things — *reason together and apply what I have given you, and it will be enough.*” (T&C 157:45)

Let’s look for minute at what the Lord means when He says, “It is not meet that I should command in all things.” We will see that it is not necessarily an invitation or license for innovation and “doing things our way.” Consider this revelation given through Joseph Smith when efforts to establish Zion in Jackson County, Missouri were underway:

“And now as I spoke concerning my servant Edward Partridge, this land is the land of his residence, and those whom he has appointed for his counselors, and also the land of the residence of him whom I have appointed to keep my storehouse. *Wherefore, let them bring their families to this land, as they shall counsel between themselves and me. For behold, it is not meet that I should command in all things, for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant, wherefore, he receives no reward. Verily I say, men should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness, for the power is in them wherein they are agents unto themselves. And inasmuch as men do good, they shall in no way lose their reward, but he that does not anything until he is commanded, and receives a commandment with a doubtful heart, and keeps it with slothfulness, the same is damned.*” T&C 45:6

See, commandments are used to compel, counsel is used to instruct, inform and enlighten. What does it mean to be anxiously engaged in a good cause according to our own free will? This can easily become one’s license for doing things in the wrong way or at the wrong time, or both. Who is responsible for determining the “goodness” of one’s cause? We really ought to be acting at all times in accordance with God’s will, with and according to His counsel. Let God be the one who determines the goodness of your cause and always seek His counsel to determine how to be the best “agent unto yourself.”

We were undeniably given commandments that must be obeyed. I don’t think anything we received as a commandment in the Answer is “new” per say, other than it was voiced anew to us specifically. The Lord has said about His commandments:

“Who am I that made man, says the Lord, that will hold him guiltless that obey not my commandments? Who am I, says the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled? I command and men obey not, I revoke and they receive not the blessing, then they say in their hearts, This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But woe unto such, for their reward lurks beneath, and not from above.” T&C 45:7



Our repentance will require obedience to all of the words of the Lord. Let's hear some of them again:

"...Each of you must equally walk truly in my path, not only to profess, but to do as you profess. (T&C 157:19)

All must come unto me or they cannot be saved. And how do men come unto me? It is by faith, repentance, and baptism, which bring the holy ghost, to then show you all things you must know. (T&C 157:21)

Hear therefore my words: Repent and bring forth fruit showing repentance (T&C 157:23)

I instruct my people to add to their records the following writings: [Now contained in the scriptures as replacements for D&C sections 110 and 132.] (T&C 157:24)

*... reason together and apply what I have given you, and it will be enough.* (T&C 157:45)

There will yet be records restored from all the tribes, that will be gathered again into one, and also as I have said, there is some truth in the Apocrypha, including the Pseudepigrapha and scrolls recovered at Nag Hammadi, and other New Testament texts uncovered since the time of Joseph Smith, and findings at Qumran, and there are other records yet to be recovered; and whoso is enlightened by the spirit shall obtain benefit by their careful study. (T&C 157:47)

It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. (T&C 157:48)

... Be like me. ... Come to me and I will make sins as scarlet become white as snow, and I will make you stand boldly before me, confident of my love. (T&C 157:49)

... I say to you, Forgive one another. Be tender with one another, pursue judgment, bless the oppressed, care for the orphan, and uplift the widow in her need, for I have redeemed you from being orphaned and taken you that you are no longer a widowed people. Rejoice in me, and rejoice with your brethren and sisters who are mine also. Be one. (T&C 157:50)

... Do my works and you will know my doctrine, for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge to my people. If you return good for evil, you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master. You call me Lord, and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace, and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety. (T&C 157:51)

There are only two ways: the way I lead, that goes upward in light and truth unto Eternal lives — and if you turn from it, you follow the way of darkness and the deaths. Those who want to come where I am must be able to abide the conditions established for my Father's Kingdom. I have given to you the means to understand the conditions you must abide. [1] I came and lived in the world to be the light of the world. [2] I have sent others who have testified of me and taught you. [3] I have sent my light into the world. Let not your hearts remain divided from one another and divided from me. (T&C 157:52)

Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother's error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth. I will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word, and in very deed. For I will come unto you if you will come unto me. (T&C 157:53)

Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy, which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger, nor to invoke my name in vain as if I had part in your every dispute. Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me, I will tell you my part. (T&C 157:54)

You are not excused from writing a statement of principles that I have required at your hands. I forbade my servant David from participating, and again forbid him. But I require a statement of principles to be adopted by the mutual agreement of my people, for if you cannot do so, you will be unable to accomplish other works that I will require at your hands. When you have an agreed statement of principles, I require it to also be added as a guide and standard for my people to follow. Remember there are others who know nothing, as yet, of my work now underway, and therefore the guide and standard is to bless, benefit, and inform them — so I command you to be wise in word and kind in deed as you write what I require of you. (T&C 157:55)

Do not murmur, saying, Too much has been required at our hands in too short a time. If your hearts were right, it was a light thing I have asked. You hinder and delay and then you say I require too much of you and do not allow you time, when, if your hearts were right and you prepared yourselves, you could have finished this work long ago. Do you indeed desire to be my people? Then accept and do as I have required. (T&C 157:56)

[Consider this if you are still determining “what you learned or what ought you to have learned.” From the Prayer—“I confess my own failure in securing a replacement for the former section 20. You required a unified statement of principles for us to adopt, and I asked others to provide such a document. I have understood that you required that to be developed by others and not myself, and therefore I have refrained from any involvement. Despite three attempts by representatives of twenty-three fellowships, there remain disputes, and no agreed statement of principles has been composed and accepted by the people as you directed. Forgive those who have worked unsuccessfully. I ask that you look at the earnest desires of those involved and forgive this failure.”(T&C 156:13)]

Commandments concerning priesthood were given(T&C 157:57)

There remains great work yet to be done. Receive my covenant and abide in it, not as in the former time when jarring, jealousy, contention, and backbiting caused anger, broke hearts, and hardened the souls of those claiming to be my saints. But receive it in spirit, in meekness, and

in truth. I have given you a former commandment that I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men. And again, I have taught that if you forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive your trespasses. How do I act toward mankind? If men intend no offense, I take no offense, but if they are taught and should have obeyed, then I reprove and correct, and forgive and forget. You cannot be at peace with one another if you take offense when none is intended. But again I say, Judge not others except by the rule you want used to weigh yourself. (T&C 157:58)

I will give to you words to speak to the people to accept my covenant, and you shall read those words to them. Read first to the people these words I now speak, and then read the words of the covenant, and the people who will receive and do my words and my covenant shall then stand and say, Yes.[ not only a commandment but an ordinance] (T&C 157:59)

In the world, tares are ripening. And so I ask you, What of the wheat? Let your pride, and your envy, and your fears depart from you. (T&C 157:64)

Cry peace. Proclaim my words. Invite those who will repent to be baptized and forgiven, and they shall obtain my spirit to guide them. The time is short and I come quickly, therefore open your mouths and warn others to flee the wrath which is to come as men in anger destroy one another. The wicked shall destroy the wicked, and I will hold the peacemakers in the palm of my hand and none can take them from me. (T&C 157:65)

Be comforted, be of good cheer, rejoice, and look up...(T&C 157:66)

These were the teachings, commandments, precepts and principles expounded to us by the Lord. We benefit most when every word carries the same weight. Precepts and principles ought to have the same importance to us as teachings and commandments because it is written:

“And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life, for you shall live by every word that proceeds forth from the mouth of God. For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatever is truth is light, and whatever is light is spirit, even the spirit of Jesus Christ. And the spirit gives light to every man that comes into the world, and the spirit enlightens every man through the world that hearkens to the voice of the spirit, and everyone that hearkens to the voice of the spirit comes unto God, even the Father. And the Father teaches him of the covenant which the Father has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for yours only, but for the sake of the whole world.” T&C 82:18

When we hearken to the words given to us by the Lord, repent, and do according to His words, these are some of the wonderful things we can expect:

“... I will establish my covenant with you and claim you as mine. (T&C 157:23)

I, the Lord, say to you, with these additions, what you have gathered as scriptures are acceptable to me for this time and contain many plain and precious things. Nevertheless, whoso is enlightened by the spirit shall obtain the greater benefit, because you need not think they contain all my words nor that more will not be given, for there are many things yet to be

restored unto my people. It is ordained that some things are only to be given to people who are mine and cannot otherwise be given to mankind on earth. You do not yet understand the glory to be revealed unto my covenant people. (T&C 157:44)

And all who abide [My Covenant], whether on this land or any other land, will be mine, and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest, and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people and I will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given, until they know the mysteries of God in full. (T&C 157:48)

Come to me and I will make sins as scarlet become white as snow, and I will make you stand boldly before me, confident of my love. (T&C 157:49)

Do my works and you will know my doctrine, for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge to my people. (T&C 157:51)

[Aside: How many of us have read: "Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God and the days will come that you shall see him, for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time and in his own way, and according to his own will.?" (T&C 86:12) and asked, "what does it mean to sanctify yourself, how is it even possible? This is answered perfectly in one brief sentence. "If you return good for evil, you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master." (T&C 157:51)]

You call me Lord, and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace, and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety. (T&C 157:51)

For I will come unto you if you will come unto me. (T&C 157:53)

Pray together in humility and together meekly present your dispute to me, and if you are contrite before me, I will tell you my part. (T&C 157:54)

Then [by abiding in the Covenant] by my law and my word they will be mine, and I will be with and lead my people onward through the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, the Record of Heaven, the peaceable things of immortal glory, even the holy ghost which will abide with them, and you will be children of the Most High God, fellow servants and numbered with the congregation of the just. Therefore rejoice! (T&C 157:60)

And the angels are given charge to watch over and protect my people. (T&C 157:61)

...But if righteousness returns and my people prove by their actions, words, and thoughts to yield to my spirit and hearken to my commandments, then will the earth rejoice, for the feet of those who cry peace upon her mountains are beautiful indeed, and I, the Lord, will bring again Zion, and the earth will rejoice. (T&C 157:63)

... I will come to my tabernacle and dwell with my people in Zion, and none will overtake it. (T&C 157:64)

The wicked shall destroy the wicked, and I will hold the peacemakers in the palm of my hand and none can take them from me.

Be comforted, be of good cheer, rejoice, and look up, for I am with you who remember me, and all those who watch for me, always, even unto the end. Amen. (T&C 157:65)

Because the Lord's will is made so clearly known, as it is in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, it is certainly unwise to attempt to justify any contrary behavior. Every single word matters! If you struggle to understand the meaning of words the Lord has chosen to use, don't ask your neighbor for clarification— ask the Lord. They are His words. He used them for a specific reason. If you ask Him, He will do all that is necessary to help you understand why He used a particular word and its intended meaning. Finally, accept His explanation. As an example, if the Lord chooses to use the word "dispute" or "disputation" in teaching His will concerning mutual agreement and you don't understand how that word fits, ask Him for clarification and be willing to adjust your understanding of the word. A single misunderstood word can wreak havoc with the soul.

The time is spent. May I share a couple of parting thoughts with you? Both from the Epistle of Jacob:

"If any man among you seem to be religious and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the vices of the world." (Ep. Of Jacob 1:7)

"Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge, among you? Let him show out of good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife are, there are confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace." (Ep. Of Jacob 1:14)

It is remarkable to me that the Lord offered His Covenant to us so quickly after pointing out our true nature, but He most certainly did. He must have seen something in us that we couldn't see in ourselves. He offered a Covenant and we accepted it. Let us abide in it now. Let us "do" and "become" what we must. Let us act in obedience so that the power contained in God's words can be manifest. Let's continue to repent and eradicate the suffering of ourselves and those we are yoked with. We must continue to repent until there is no need to do so, and that time has not come yet.

All suffering will cease when we love one another as the Lord Jesus Christ loves us.

In the Name of Jesus Christ Amen