

as that through which our forefathers have passed, and our brothers and sisters who have gone before us in the early generations of men. We inherit in common with them, and we have the power to serve the Lord and to keep His commandments, or we have power to reject them. There is no compulsion upon the souls of the children of men. There is no compulsion upon us when the Gospel is presented to us as to whether we will receive it or not. Every man exercises his own agency and his own judgment. And after we have surrendered and have received faith from the Lord, and have entered into covenant with Him to serve Him and keep His commandments, it depends then upon us as to whether we will continue in His service or not. As we came freely and of our own choice into the Church, and have taken these obligations upon us, so are we just as free to go out of the Church and desert the Church whenever we please. That is the liberty that we enjoy, and the Gospel does not deprive us of it, and never will. This agency will endure, and the power in us will endure, and will increase with our knowledge and with our experience.

Now, it is very desirable, my brethren and sisters, not only desirable and pleasing to the Lord, but it is very important to us as individual members of this Church, to know that we are actually progressing, and that we are faithfully laboring for the salvation of the souls of men; first, our own souls. Man should first save his own soul. I think if we turn to the history of any of the men whose record may be seen and read in any of these books, (Bible and Book of Mormon) you will find that where one has become a devout laborer for the salvation of the souls of men, there has been wrought salvation in his soul first. The first soul to be saved with me is my soul. I say the first soul to be saved with our Savior, the Messiah, was His soul; and it required the devotion and humility and determination that possessed His soul before He could come to be my Savior and yours. He had first to work out the salvation of His own soul, as every other son of God has had to do. But He was the senior. He stood next to His Father. He was our Elder Brother. And as He had first labored and secured His own salvation, He became the Prince of saviors. He was worthy to come as the Savior of all saviors, the Lord of all lords among the children of men; for in valiancy He was valiant; He was valiancy itself; He was obedient, He was devoted, He was the very personification of humility and of integrity and obedience. He surrendered His whole soul entirely to the will of the Father. There were no questionings in His mind. If the time had ever been in His life that questions had possessed His soul, as they have possessed the souls of great men, all questions had been settled, and He had passed that line. When a man hath gone so far he has passed the danger line, and Jesus, our Elder Brother, had accomplished this; and He had done it in His own proper person and spirit, by His own devotion and faithfulness, by His own serenity of mind and spirit, and His deep and undying devotion to His Father who dwelt in heaven. And the reason that He stood pre-eminently above all was because that He had outstripped all. He had done more than

all. He was first and foremost, and the greatest, the champion, the chief! Between Him and His Father all chances of division and separation had vanished; I might say all possibility of it had been dismissed. He had thus proven himself. But first, as I would draw your attention to—first saving himself, securing His own standing and fellowship with His Father. Then He was prepared to help others.

I will read a little to you from the life of Alma. He was giving instruction and exhortation to his son Helaman, the benefit of a father's counsel and experience. A thought I would not like to lose sight of came to my mind while Brother John was speaking of the primaries meeting with older people, and I will digress enough to speak of it here. Oh! how valuable it is for children to meet with their seniors, their fathers and their mothers, people who have had experience. And if it be valuable for children to meet with their parents and have the benefit of their experience, knowledge and wisdom, is it not just as true that it is profitable for the young people in Zion to meet with the older ones and the experienced, and to give ear to them, that the young may have the benefit of the experience of the aged? For, as I said, there are times in this Church when we pass through trying circumstances, that if we had time might be referred to in detail, where the people are thoroughly proven upon important points, and it must needs be that these times of trial should come, and that offenses should come; but woe to them by whom offenses do come! But when the Church has once passed through such an experience and has had a trial and proving, the great majority of the people will remember that. Still there is always with the Church a percentage of the people who are below the age of understanding. They grow up, and a generation comes along in a little season that knew nothing of those trials, and have not been tried and had experience. Then the time of trial comes again. It is necessary that these times of trial come. The experiences that this Church has passed through have been necessary for the proving and trial of the people. It was necessary that there should be an opposition, as there was an opposition in the councils of the Lord, when Satan led the hosts of the discontented against the Son of God and the Father. It is necessary that there should be opposition in this world. The very conditions that exist in this world are important and necessary for our trial and proving. And for this Church it is necessary for the leading Elders of the Church to have experience, and all the people to be tried also. But if we are wise as young men and young women in the Church we will be led and guided by the older ones and profit by their experience, and listen to the wise and profitable sounds that they may utter in our ears, and profit by what they have endured; and it will take all that we can possibly learn from their experience to enable us to endure. If we are wise, we may learn from what others have experienced. But some of us are so dull that we need to learn by experience. We are not always willing to profit by the experience examples, instructions and precepts of others. It is necessary that we should have some experience, and important that we should be tried. But the strength of the ex-

perience of the aged in this Church ought to be sufficient to preserve the young and the inexperienced and to prepare them to endure the trials that shall come upon them. But I was to read some of the words of Alma. He says:

For I went about with the sons of Mosiah, seeking to destroy the church of God; but behold, God sent his holy angel to stop us by the way.

And behold, he spake unto us, as it were the voice of thunder, and the whole earth did tremble beneath our feet, and we all fell to the earth, for the fear of the Lord came upon us.

But behold, the voice said unto me, Arise. And I arose and stood up, and beheld the angel.

And he said unto me, if thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God.

And it came to pass that I fell to the earth; and it was for the space of three days and three nights, that I could not open my mouth; neither had I the use of my limbs.

And the angel spake more things unto me, which were heard by my brethren, but I did not hear them; for when I heard the words, if thou wilt be destroyed of thyself, seek no more to destroy the church of God, I was struck with such great fear and amazement, lest perhaps I should be destroyed, that I fell to the earth, and I did hear no more.

But I was racked with eternal torment, for my soul was harrowed up to the greatest degree, and racked with all my sins.

Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell; yea, I saw that I had rebelled against my God, and that I had not kept his holy commandments.

Yea, and I had murdered many of his children, or rather led them away unto destruction; yea, and in fine so great had been my iniquities, that the very thoughts of coming into the presence of my God, did rack my soul with inexpressible horror.

Oh, thought I, that I could be banished and become extinct both soul and body, that I might not be brought to stand in the presence of my God, to be judged of my deeds.

And now, for three days and for three nights was I racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.

And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remember also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

Now as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart, O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who art in the gall of bitterness, and art encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

And oh, what joy, and what marvellous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain;

I would have you notice how quickly light doth come to the soul of man when relieved from sin and transgression, and the transformation from the depths of sorrow and condemnation to that of peace, joy and happiness supreme; the immediate transition by the penitent soul that has been pierced by the power of God and is redeemed by the atonement of the Son of God; how readily comes this change! Who cannot trust the Lord when such witness is before us of the blessing and mercy of the Father and of the Savior?

Yea, I say unto you, my son, that there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter, as was my pains. Yea, and again I say unto, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as was my joy;