



The Joy of Repentance

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Throughout His mortal ministry, the Savior showed great love for each son and daughter of God—especially those who had fallen. In the parables of the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, and the prodigal son, the Lord emphasized the importance of reaching out to those who stray or are lost and the joy that is felt when they return (see Luke 15). For example, He said, “Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:7).

I wish to focus on the great joy that comes to those who repent and the feelings of joy we receive as we help others through the repentance process.

“Men Are, That They Might Have Joy”

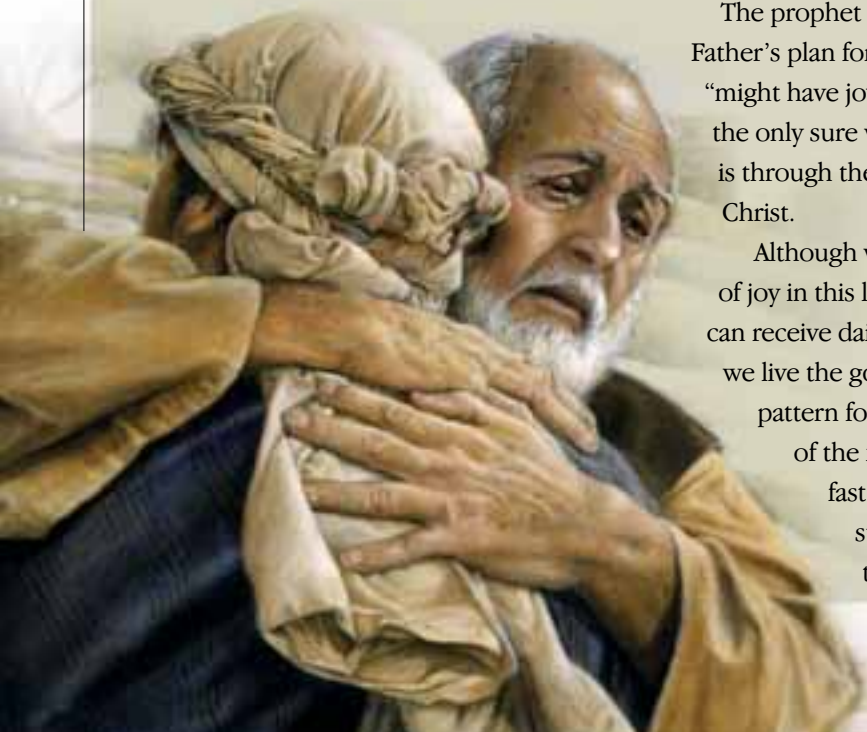
Joy is much deeper than simply passing moments of contentment or feelings of happiness. Real joy, or “everlasting joy” (2 Nephi 8:11), comes from experiencing the power of the Atonement through sincere repentance and from a spiritual confirmation that we can be redeemed from sin through the Lord Jesus Christ and inherit eternal life.

The prophet Lehi taught that Heavenly Father’s plan for each of us is that we “might have joy” (2 Nephi 2:25) and that the only sure way to find everlasting joy is through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Although we cannot receive a *fulness* of joy in this life (see D&C 93:33–34), we can receive daily manifestations of joy as we live the gospel. Mormon taught the pattern for finding joy when he said of the faithful Nephites, “They did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer



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and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35).

Filled with Joy through the Holy Ghost

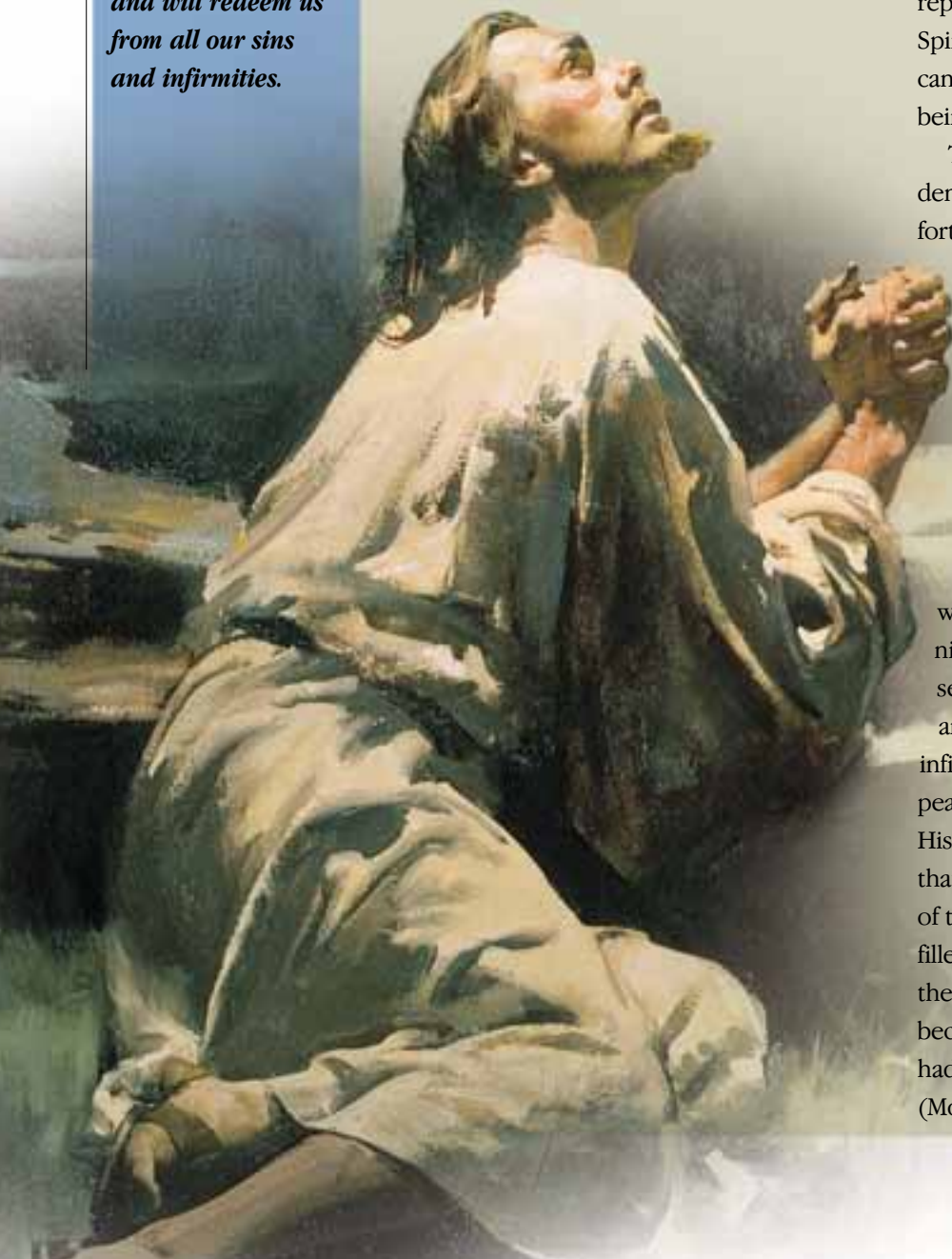
In many scriptures the prophets speak of feeling joy and feeling the Holy Ghost in

similar terms. For example, in the book of Acts we learn that “the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 13:52). And the Lord promises those who follow Him, “I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy” (D&C 11:13).

When we understand that being filled with joy involves being filled with the Holy Ghost, we realize that true happiness comes from repenting of our sins and living worthy of the Spirit. In addition, when feeling the Spirit, we can find great joy in knowing that we are being sanctified before God.

The joy that comes from repentance is evident on many levels. First is the joy and comfort that come to the heart of a repentant soul as the burden of sin is lifted. Second are the deep feelings of joy and love that come to those who help others work through the repentance process. And finally there are the joyful feelings of a loving Savior as He sees us follow His admonitions and rely upon the healing power of His atoning sacrifice.

As we apply the Atonement in our lives, we must reflect on the Savior and His infinite gift to us, exercise faith in Him, and seek a spiritual confirmation that He can and will redeem us from all our sins and infirmities. Thus, we will feel the joy and peace that can be manifested to us only by His Holy Spirit. Our experience will be like that of the people of Zarahemla: “The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come” (Mosiah 4:3).



“That I Might Bring Souls unto Repentance”

After we have felt the joy that comes through the blessings of the Atonement, we can also find great joy in inviting others to come unto Christ. While teaching his son Helaman, Alma said: “I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

“Yea, and now behold, O my son, the Lord doth give me exceedingly great joy in the fruit of my labors” (Alma 36:24–25).

The Savior Himself taught: “If it so be that you should labor all your days in crying repentance unto this people, and bring, save it be one soul unto me, how great shall be your joy with him in the kingdom of my Father!

“And now, if your joy will be great with one soul that you have brought unto me . . . , how great will be your joy if you should bring many souls unto me!” (D&C 18:15–16).

“How Great Is His Joy in the Soul That Repenteth”

Finally, I cannot help but imagine the sense of fulfillment the Savior must feel each time we repent of our sins and apply His atoning sacrifice in our lives. Surely John echoed the Savior’s feelings when he declared, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). Christ, speaking of Himself, said, “How great is his joy in the soul that repenteth” (D&C 18:13).

After teaching the Nephites about His Atonement and what they needed to do to stand spotless before Him, Jesus expressed His feelings to them by saying: “My joy is great, even unto fulness, because of you . . . ; yea, and even the Father rejoiceth, and also all the holy angels, because of you and this generation; for none of them are lost. . . . In them I have fulness of joy” (3 Nephi 27:30–31).

I testify that we too can find joy in this life and a fulness of joy in the life hereafter by “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who *for the joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2; emphasis added). ■

THE JOY OF A REPENTANT SOUL

We can learn much about the joy that follows true repentance by studying the experiences of the Apostle Paul and Alma the Younger, although our experiences may not be as dramatic (see Acts 8:1–3; 9:1–31; Mosiah 27:8–31; Alma 36:5–24). Paul and Alma were men of influence who went about persecuting the Saints. In the midst of their destructive actions, both men received heavenly visitors. An angel



of the Lord appeared to Alma, while Jesus Himself spoke to Paul, asking, “Why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4).

Both men fell to the earth as a result of what they saw and heard. Alma was struck dumb, and Paul became blind. More

important, both men recovered from their wicked and fallen state in a similar way. Paul simply asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). He immediately turned his life to the Savior and followed the Lord’s instructions with exactness. Alma describes his repentance:

“As I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered 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 am in the gall of bitterness, and am 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 marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with *joy* as exceeding as was my pain!” (Alma 36:17–20; emphasis added).

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