





By Elder
Kyle S. McKay
Of the Seventy

A Mighty Change of Heart

With the Fall of Adam, sickness and sin were introduced into the world. Both can be fatal in their respective realms. Of all sicknesses, perhaps none is so pervasive or devastating as cancer. In some countries, more than one third of the population will develop some form of cancer, and it is responsible for almost one-fourth of all deaths.¹ Cancer often begins with a single cell, so small it can be seen only with a microscope. But it is capable of growing and spreading rapidly.

Cancer patients undergo treatment in order to put the cancer in remission. Complete remission means that there is no longer any detectible evidence of the disease. However, professionals are quick to point out that although a patient may be in remission, it does not necessarily mean that he or she is cured.² Thus, although remission provides relief and hope, cancer patients always hope for something beyond remission—they hope to be cured. According to one source, “To render someone cured of cancer, one has to wait and see if the cancer will ever come back, so, time is the crucial factor. If a patient remains in remission for a few years, the cancer might be cured. Certain cancers can reoccur after many years of remission.”³

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Sickness and Sin

As devastating as cancer is to the body, sin is even more devastating to the soul. Sin usually starts small—sometimes imperceptibly small—but it is capable of growing rapidly. It cankers, then cripples, then kills the soul. It is the major cause—indeed, the only cause—of spiritual death in all creation. The treatment for sin is repentance. True repentance is 100 percent effective in putting the sinner in remission, or bringing about a remission of sins. This remission offers relief and joy to the soul. However, receiving a remission of sin and being free from its symptoms and effects does not necessarily

mean that the sinner has been completely cured. There is something about the heart of fallen man that allows or is susceptible to sin. Thus, sin can reoccur, even after years of remission. Staying in remission, or in other words, retaining a remission of sins, is crucial to being completely healed.

Cleansed and Cured

This analogy helps us understand that spiritually, we must be not only cleansed from sin but also cured of sinfulness. The war that pits our will to do good against our nature to do bad can be tiring. If faithful, we will be victorious not simply because we have imposed our will upon our nature, but because we have yielded our will to God and He has changed our nature.

King Benjamin taught, “For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man . . . through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:19). In response to this and other teachings, Benjamin’s people prayed, “O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, *and* our hearts may be purified” (Mosiah 4:2; emphasis added). After they prayed, the Lord responded to their two-part request. First, “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” (Mosiah 4:3).

Seeing that his people were “in remission,” King Benjamin urged them toward a complete cure by teaching them how to stay in remission (see Mosiah 4:11–30). “If ye do this,” he promised, “ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and always retain a remission of your sins” (Mosiah 4:12).

The people believed and bound themselves to King Benjamin’s words, whereupon the Lord answered the second part of their prayer—that “[their] hearts may be purified.” In gratitude and praise, the people cried out, “The Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent . . . has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually” (Mosiah 5:2). King Benjamin explained that this mighty change meant they had been born of God (see Mosiah 5:7).

“How Is It Done?”

The prophet Alma taught that we must both repent *and* be born again—born of God, changed in our hearts (see Alma 5:49). As we continually repent, the Lord will take away all our sins *and* He will take

away that which naturally causes or allows sin in us. But, in the words of Enos, “Lord, how is it done?” (Enos 1:7). The answer is simple, yet profound and eternal. To those who have been healed from any condition, physical or spiritual, the Lord has declared, “Thy faith hath made thee whole” (see Mark 5:34; Enos 1:8).

The mighty change of heart experienced by Alma was wrought “according to his faith,” and the hearts of his followers were changed as they “put their trust in the true and living God” (Alma 5:12, 13). The hearts of King Benjamin’s people were “changed through faith on [the Savior’s] name” (Mosiah 5:7).

If we would have this kind of faith, so that we can trust the Lord with all our heart, we must do what leads to faith and then do what faith leads to. Among the many things that lead to faith, in context of this change of heart, the Lord

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has emphasized fasting, prayer, and the word of God. And although faith leads to many things, repentance is its first fruit.

Consider the following two verses from the book of Helaman that highlight these principles. First, we read of a people who “did fast and pray oft, and did wax . . . firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ . . . even to the purifying



Thanks to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can not only be cleansed from sin; we can also be cured of sinfulness.

and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God” (Helaman 3:35). Then, from Samuel the Lamanite prophet, we learn, “The holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets, . . . leadeth . . . to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance, which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart” (Helaman 15:7).

Reliant on God

Here we should pause and acknowledge that this mighty change of which we speak is wrought *in* us; it is not wrought *by* us. We are capable of repenting, changing our conduct, our attitudes, even our desires and beliefs, but it is beyond our power and capacity to change our nature. For this mighty change, we are wholly reliant on Almighty God. It is He who graciously purifies our hearts and changes our nature “after all we can do” (2 Nephi 25:23). His invitation is constant and sure: “Repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall *heal* [you]” (3 Nephi 18:32; emphasis added).

The effect of being healed from sinfulness is that we become “changed from [our] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness . . . becoming his sons and daughters; And thus [we] become new creatures” (Mosiah

27:25, 26). Our countenances radiate the Light of Christ. Moreover, the scriptures tell us that “whosoever is born of God sinneth not” (1 John 5:18). This is so not because we are incapable of sinning, but because it is now our nature *not* to sin. That is a mighty change, indeed.

It should be remembered that experiencing a mighty change of heart is a process over time, not a point in time. The change is usually gradual, sometimes incrementally imperceptible, but it is real, it is powerful, and it is necessary.

If you have not yet experienced such a mighty change, I would ask of you: Have you repented and received a remission of your sins? Do you study the holy scriptures? Do you fast and pray often, that you may wax firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ? Do you have faith enough to trust the Lord with all your heart? Are you standing steadfastly in that faith? Do you watch your thoughts, words, and deeds and observe the commandments of God? If you do these things, you will always rejoice and be filled with the love of God and always retain a remission of your sins. And if you stay in remission, you will be healed, cured, and *changed!*

Jesus Christ has power to cleanse us from our sins and also cure us of our sinfulness. He is mighty to save, and to that end, He is mighty to change. If we will yield our hearts to Him, exercising faith by making all the changes we are capable of making, He will exercise His power in us to bring about this mighty change of heart (see Alma 5:14). ■

NOTES

1. See Stacy Simon, “Facts & Figures 2019: US Cancer Death Rate Has Dropped 27% in 25 Years,” American Cancer Society, Jan. 8, 2019, cancer.org.
2. See “Remission: What Does It Mean?” webMD.com.
3. Cathy Sweat, *The Gates to Recovery* (2019).