

SECOND COMFORTER

SEEKING THE FACE OF GOD

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COMING TO KNOW GOD

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," the Lord told his disciples in response to Thomas' question about how they can know the way. He added, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).¹ This is a concept repeated again and again in the scriptures. Jesus Christ is the way. It is only through Him that we can return to Father. This statement is clearly understood to anyone who comprehends even a portion the atoning sacrifice of the Master.

Keep in mind, however, that the Lord's statement above was not intended to be vague or broad in scope. Simply calling on his name or accepting him as your Lord is insufficient for the greatest blessings he has in store. One who wishes to gain the highest glories in his kingdom cannot simply follow another person into heaven. The Way that Jesus showed his disciples is a straight forward, albeit difficult, journey. It is to follow his path. It is to come to know who he was and is. The Lord said in his intercessory prayer, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

The Lord teaches us to come to know him intimately and personally. And in order to come to know him, we must become like him. Moroni aptly stated, "that [we] may become the sons of God, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (Moroni 7 [7:48]).² The pinnacle blessing that God grants any of his children is to receive his personal ministry. It is to receive the Second Comforter.

WHAT IS THE SECOND COMFORTER?

There are very few scriptural occurrence that refer directly to the Second or "[an]other" Comforter, but the concept can be found throughout the teachings of the prophets. In fact, once a person recognizes what they are looking for, this principle surfaces throughout the scriptures. The pattern is repetitive and conclusive—it is our privilege and our obligation to receive the Second Comforter.

Jesus taught his disciples this concept at the last supper. He spoke of two distinct "comforters" they would eventually receive. The first comforter is the Holy Ghost, "whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). But he also promised those ancient apostles another Comforter, the Spirit of truth. This Second Comforter is Jesus Christ.

¹ Note that references from the Old and New Testament are taken from the Joseph Smith inspired version of the Bible. Any deviance in the King James Version of the Bible is noted in brackets following the reference.

² Note that scripture references from the Book of Mormon come from the 1830 published edition. The standard 2013 edition reference is found in brackets.

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.

John 14:16-18

Answering his disciples questions, Jesus continued, “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). The apostles didn’t seem to fully grasp what he meant at the time, though it is clear they later came to understand. In truth, most of Christendom has not understood what the Lord meant. It was not until Joseph Smith, with prophetic insight, expounded on the Lord’s words that clarity was brought to this subject. Joseph taught, “The appearing of the father and of the Son in that verse [John 14:23] is a personal appearance.—to say that the father and the Son dwell in a mans heart is an old Sectarian notion. and is not correct.”³

THE FIRST COMFORTER: THE HOLY GHOST

The first comforter is the Holy Ghost. This comforter comes to any man or woman sincerely seeking the Lord after setting a course upon the path toward God. Why is he called the comforter? Because he quickens the mind. He reveals truth, even he who the Spirit of truth. He testifies of the Lord, Jesus Christ and the Eternal Father. He teaches us how to love them. He brings us into the embrace of our Brother. Then our Brother can take us to the feet of Father and Mother. This is why he is a comforter.

This gift can only be received after entering into the waters of baptism. One of the purposes of baptism is to prepare an individual to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Joseph boldly stated a person “might as well be [sic] baptize a bag of sand as a man if not done in view of the getting of the Holy Ghost.—baptism by water is but 1/2 a baptism—& is good for nothing with[out] the other, the Holy Ghost.”⁴

The Holy Ghost illuminates the path to Christ. Yet he does much more than simply lighting the Way. He prepares us in all things for that next Comforter. You do not need books or blogs or anything else to come to know Jesus Christ. You simply need to listen and hear the Holy Ghost speak, and he will teach all things you need to know.

Therefore it is given to abide in you, the record of heaven, the Comforter, the peaceable things of immortal glory, the truth of all things, that which quickeneth all things which maketh alive all things, that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice and judgment.

Genesis 6:63-64 [Moses 6:60-61]

The Holy Ghost is a vital part in our journey to God. In fact, we cannot come to God without him. One crucial role of the Holy Spirit is to teach truth. Joseph taught it is “impossible for a man to be saved in ignorance.”⁵ As the Lord said in his intercessory prayer to Father, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). It is the Holy Ghost that prepares us to receive that Second Comforter.

How can we gain understanding of the Savior unless we walk his path? It is not enough to learn about him. We must truly come to know him. That means to speak with him, to listen to him, to walk with him, to learn from him, to love him. This is a pivotal role of the Holy Ghost. He facilitates that. As great as seeing the Lord may be, the impressions of the Holy Ghost carry a deeper and more abiding effect upon the soul. He is your guide to Christ. And even after receiving that Second Comforter, one continues to always rely upon the Holy Ghost. It is not replacing one with the other, but adding an additional Comforter upon the first. They are in all essence one. In the Lectures on Faith, Joseph taught that Jesus came to

³ "Journal, December 1842–June 1844; Book 2, 10 March 1843–14 July 1843," p. [37–38], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-december-1842-june-1844-book-2-10-march-1843-14-july-1843/46>.

⁴ "9 July 1843 (Sunday Morning). Temple Stand," *The Words of Joseph Smith*, eds. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1980).

⁵ "Discourse, 17 May 1843–A, as Reported by William Clayton," p. [16], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 17, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-17-may-1843-a-as-reported-by-william-clayton/1>.

possess the same mind as Father, “which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one, or in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things” (Lectures on Faith 5:2).⁶

Joseph Smith describes effects of the Holy Ghost as “pure intelligence”⁷ upon the mind. After all, he is the mind of Father and the Savior, as stated above. It is through the Spirit that we can begin to understand intimately who Jesus Christ is. That comforter is a guide and witness. Nephi said “if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will shew unto you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 14 [32:5]). How can we successfully navigate the path back to God if we do not have the guiding hand of the Holy Ghost? Jesus Christ is the way. The Holy Ghost reveals that way to us.

Being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost is simply not enough to truly receive the inspiring light of the Holy Ghost. Anyone can be dunked in water and have hands put on their head, but not everyone is spiritually prepared to receive the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. It takes work. The access is available to everyone, but it is claimed by few. That is because it is not a passive activity. Nephi gave some of the prerequisites to receiving the Holy Ghost.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism; yea, by following your Lord and Saviour down into the water, according to his word; behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost.

2 Nephi 13 [31:13]

THE OTHER COMFORTER: JESUS CHRIST

Only after a person has sufficiently proven to the Lord that he or she is unwavering in determination to follow the Savior will the Lord grant that great gift of the Second Comforter. So what is the other Comforter that the Lord promised to his ancient apostles? It is no other than the Savior himself. It is the constant companionship of the Father and the Son, to dwell in the hearts of those who receive this promise and to minister in person to them as they see fit. “They all received the light of the countenance of their lord; every man in his hour, and in his time, and in his season” (D&C 7:14 [88:58]).⁸ Joseph explained the Second Comforter in the following way:

Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more or less than the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter, that when any man obtains this last Comforter he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and this is the State and place the Ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious vision—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the third heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the First Born &c.⁹

It is tempting to view the ancient prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, John, Paul, etc., as being chosen by the Lord because of some divine predetermination, that they were somehow greater or better than anyone else. Yet the reason these righteous men (and I’m sure there were women, too) were chosen was because the Lord knew he could depend on them. Why could he depend on them? They pursued with all diligence a calling and an election from God. Then they were blessed with the Second Comforter and chosen as ministers and prophets for the Savior. That’s how it works. That is how a prophet is

⁶ Lectures on Faith, as found in the 1835 publication of the Doctrine & Covenants. (Hereafter *Lectures*.)

⁷ "History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842] [addenda]," p. 9 [addenda], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/544>. See also Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1973) 3:381. (hereafter *History of the Church*.)

⁸ Note that scripture references from the Doctrine & Covenants (hereafter D&C) come from the 1835 published edition. The standard 2013 edition reference is found in brackets.

⁹ "History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842] [addenda]," p. 9 [addenda], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/544>. See also *History of the Church* 3:381.

chosen, not by election in the sense we think of it, but by selection from God due to their determination to follow the Lord at all costs.

This opportunity is afforded to anyone. Anyone can be a prophet. Any can be called of God. But few receive that opportunity. Joseph lamented as he sat in Liberty jail, “Behold there are ma[n]y called but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world and aspire to the honors of men.”¹⁰ Alma taught about how these men received these great callings as he described the ancient high priest Melchizedek. Though they are foreordained to this calling, it is because of the foreknowledge of God who knew they would seek after and receive their calling and election.

And this is the manner after which they were ordained, being called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they being chosen good, and exercising exceeding great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such; and thus they having been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this, they might had as great privilege as their brethren.

Alma 9 [13:3-4]

The same opportunity and blessing awaits all who seek after such a promise. It is not reserved for an elite group of people. It is not reserved for the prophets. It is the other way around. We see many in the scriptures who had such magnanimous blessing. Yet we often make them more trivial because we do not understand the depth of their blessing. The ancient saints, from days of old to Joseph Smith have accomplished something that few in the church currently understand. One person, speaking about a potential spiritual threat in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, spoke out against those believing in what she termed a Mormon gnosticism. She suggested that one of the hallmarks of this maverick group of believers is “an inordinate interest in the Second Comforter.”¹¹ How can anyone have too much interest in receiving the Second Comforter? It is virtually impossible. There are many ways to go about it wrong, but no one can be too fixated on their Redeemer. But this viewpoint helps to underline the trivial nature of our current cultural beliefs about seeking an audience with the Savior.

Some of the ancient saints at Ephesus had sought after and received a sealing promise. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Ephesians 1:3-5

What is he talking about? He is speaking about the same event mentioned by Alma above. This event is a sealing of these men and women to Christ, also known as receiving the Holy Spirit of promise. Paul continued in his letter, speaking to those saints, “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:12-14).

Likewise, almost 2000 years later, to a group of saints gathered in 1832, the Lord said, “Wherefore, I now send upon you another comforter; even up on you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John. This comforter is

¹⁰ "Letter to Edward Partridge and the Church, circa 22 March 1839," p. 13-14, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/letter-to-edward-partridge-and-the-church-circa-22-march-1839/1>.

¹¹ R. Scott Lloyd, “FairMormon Conference Speaker Identifies a Spiritual Threat,” *Church News*, 19 August 2015. Accessed 18 September 2020 at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/fairmormon-conference-speaker-identifies-a-spiritual-threat?lang=eng>.

the promise which I give unto you of eternal life; even the glory of the celestial kingdom: which glory is that of the church of the first born; even of God the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son” (D&C 7:1-2 [88:3-5]).

HOW DO I RECEIVE THE SECOND COMFORTER?

The promise of the Lord is simple and beautiful. “Verily thus saith the Lord, it shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh their sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face, and know that I am” (D&C 82:1 [93:1]). How could it get more simple than that? Yet it is easier said than done.

Seeking after the face of Christ is a straight forward, but difficult, journey. That means the path is clear, but not always easy to follow. Jesus Christ said that he is the way. Many assume that in order to receive these promises they need to live as Jesus lived, that through their own good works they can merit this blessing. That is contrary to the teaching of the Savior. We cannot by ourselves walk the path of Christ. But we can walk with the Christ. Like John declared of the Savior, we, too, must receive “grace for grace” and continue “from grace to grace” until we receive a fulness in him (D&C 82:2 [93:12-13]). How do we do that? We keep his commandments.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever” (John 14:15-16). We simply need to follow the commandments of Christ. Joseph expounded on the Lord’s discussion with his apostles on that last Passover evening. “How is it obtained,” he asks. Then he quotes John 14:15, “Keep my commandments.”¹² Joseph stated the following:

The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest & perhaps understood by few of this generation, After a person hath faith in Christ, repents of his sins, & is Baptized for the remission of his sins & receives the Holy Ghost (by the laying on of hands) which is the first Comforter. then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering & thirsting after Righteousness. & living by every word of God & the Lord will soon say unto him Son thou shalt be exalted, &c When the Lord has thoroughly proved him & finds that the man is determined to serve him at all hazard. then the man will find his calling & Election made sure then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter which the Lord hath promised the saints as is recorded in the testimony of St John in the XIV ch from the 12th to the 27 verses.¹³

It is insufficient to simply follow behind someone else or adhere to their guidelines and hope for this ministration of the Savior. Again, this is not a passive activity. Hope is certainly important, but fundamentally lacks power without faith and charity. Righteous action is required. We can see throughout the world various ideas about what righteousness means, ranging from a vague desire in the heart to the strict adherence to rules and regulations of a church or organization. One of the keys to receiving the Second Comforter is righteous adherence to God. But what God considers righteousness is much different than what the world or church may consider righteousness. We may be tempted to feel demonstrating righteousness means doing everything required by the policies and procedures of a church. We too often become so busy doing good and righteous things that we completely miss what it means to really be righteous.

“Righteousness is not that which men esteem holiness,” Joseph declared. “That which the world call righteousness I have not any regard for.”¹⁴ We have the same problem today in churches throughout the world, including our own. In the end, righteousness is not a checklist of activities, visits, assignments, and ordinances to tick off our list. It is hearing and following the voice of Christ. I once asked the Lord the difference between a good man and a bad man. I had seen people who seem to be doing all the right things yet who have darkness in their hearts, and I have also seen people who appear to be the outcasts of the church to have hearts of gold. The Lord replied to me, “The intent of the heart.” I thought about how two individuals could partake of the sacrament exactly the same—a good action—and yet to one it counts as damnation and the other salvation. What is the difference? The intent of the heart. The same could be said for any other

¹² “Before 8 August 1839 (3),” *The Words of Joseph Smith*, eds. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1980).

¹³ “Discourse, between circa 26 June and circa 2 July 1839, as Reported by Willard Richards,” p. 19-20, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 21, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-between-circa-26-june-and-circa-2-july-1839-as-reported-by-willard-richards/5>.

¹⁴ “Discourse, 21 May 1843, as Reported by Howard Coray,” p. 36-46, *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 17, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/discourse-21-may-1843-as-reported-by-howard-coray/1>.

ordinances. I have seen people enter the temple who have defaced and persecuted others yet put on an air of pious worship, while on the other hand I have also seen those who are forgiving, charitable, and follow the word of God in their hearts, yet are denied access to the temple because of something in their past. What men call holiness is not what God calls holiness.

Intrigued, I asked the Lord the difference between a good and a righteous man. He replied, “A righteous man will always do what I ask.” Do you want to receive the Second Comforter? Then ignore that which men esteems to be holiness. Give it no regard. Instead, seek righteousness from God’s perspective. “For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God” (D&C 4:7 [84:44]). What he is saying, in a nutshell, is to follow whatever God says to you. That is his will for you. Those become his commandments to you. And do not let any man or woman get in your way. Jesus alone is the way. All others are obstacles in that path if they stand between you and the Lord.

HOW IMPORTANT IS RECEIVING THE SECOND COMFORTER?

Seeking after the face of the Savior should be our highest priority. Seeking after it is not a guarantee of obtaining it, but the journey is the key. Seeing the face of the Savior is the reward. The temple endowment teaches us how to enter into Father’s presence beyond the veil in the flesh. That it is the climactic point of the endowment session. Yet for some, this blessing is withheld in this life. For some, they will not see the Savior until the next life. Is that a failure on their part? No. No matter how much we may desire and yearn for this promise, or how diligent we may follow God’s words to us, the blessing of a personal audience with the Savior comes in his time, not ours. If the Lord wants to withhold the blessing, that is his prerogative. Yet for many, that blessing does await, if we diligently seek it.

Joseph taught that there are three degrees of glory one can attain after this life. The greatest of those is the Celestial glory, which is eternal life. That is the end goal of our religious worship. To become so much like God that we can live in his presence. “Here then is Et[erna]l. life to know the only wise and true God you have got to learn how to be a God yourself & be a K[ing]. & God Priest to God same as all have done by going from a small cap[acity] to an[othe]r. from grace to grace until the res[urrectio]n. of & sit in everlasting power as they who have gone before.”¹⁵

Again, the journey is the key. The audience with the Lord is the reward. Does it matter if we receive that audience here or there? In the end, it does not. What does matter is how we live the life we have been given. All those who ascend to this kingdom of glory receive that Second Comforter at one time or another. Joseph described these people.

[They were those] who overcome by faith, and are sealed by that Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true: they are they who are the church of the first-born: they are they into whose hands the Father has given all things: they are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory, and are priests of the Most High after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the only begotten Son: wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God.

D&C 91:5 [76:53-58]

In short, anyone who is interested in receiving eternal life, should make the calling and election their goal. They should make the Second Comforter their highest priority. There is nothing more important than your own salvation.

Unless we have this promise of eternal life sealed unto us, there is no sure guarantee of our salvation. And, you don’t have to see Jesus Christ in this life to obtain that promise. Peter saw Jesus and heard the voice of the Father. Yet he gloried in that greater assurance of his salvation. That is why it is called the more sure word of prophecy (see 2 Peter 1:19). Anything short of that promise is hope rather than an assurance. To receive ordinances in the temple, including the temple sealing, has no power upon anyone unless it is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.

¹⁵ “7 April 1844 (2) (Sunday Afternoon). Grove 1/4 mile east of Temple,” *The Words of Joseph Smith*, eds. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Salt Lake City, UT: Religious Studies Center, 1980).

All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connexions, associations or expectations that are not made and entered into and Sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise...are of no effect efficacy, virtue or force in and after the resurrection from the dead for all contracts that are not made unto this end, have an end when men are dead.¹⁶

Jesus Christ is the center—the very core—of our religion. He is the essence of our beliefs. He is the way, the truth, and the life. And he calls to us to come to him, to know him, and to receive him. I plead that we all will give full diligence to seeking the face of the Lord. There is no greater blessing than the constant companionship of our Savior. There is no greater peace or comfort than to hear his voice say to you that you will be exalted. “So be it,” he may say. He lives! Come to know him!

¹⁶ "Revelation, 12 July 1843 [D&C 132]," p. [3], *The Joseph Smith Papers*, accessed September 22, 2020, <https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/revelation-12-july-1843-dc-132/3>. Reference also D&C 132:7 in the contemporary version of the Doctrine & Covenants.