

FF the preacher's
favorite
passage

The background of the entire page is a collage. It features a close-up of a woman's face with blonde hair on the right side. Overlaid on the left and center are various US dollar bills, including a prominent \$100 bill and several \$20 bills, some of which are slightly out of focus or overlapping. The overall theme suggests a connection between money and the spiritual cost mentioned in the title.

THE COST OF ETERNITY

BY: NATHAN FRANSON

November, 2013

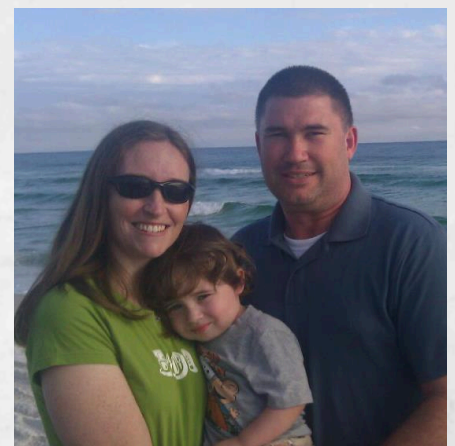
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Mormonism

Let me begin this column asserting the fact that I am not the expert on this subject. Instead, you should do your level best to educate yourself upon this subject or direct yourself to someone who is much more learned in this than I. I would recommend that you avail yourself to Nathan Franson, preacher of the Kissimmee church of Christ in Kissimmee, FL. As an ex-member of the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* or Mormon church he is more than qualified to speak on the matter

For our purposes in answering some of the questions that raise our eyebrows and cause us to have a "Say What?" moment, we will discuss Mormonism briefly. To describe what Mormonism is, Bill Bryant in his participation with the

'97 Power Lectures

'Dangerous isms', described it as such:

"A religious cult; one of the fastest

growing religious groups in the world with more than

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missionaries and with conversions at the rate of 200,000 each year; head-quartered in Salt-Lake City, Utah being officially known as the *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*." I would agree with brother Bryant's assessment of the group and condition it with the fact that his statistics were in 1997; Certainly the numbers of the Mormon church has exceeded what he presented then. They are most definitely growing quickly and they are very dedicated to their cause.

It is unlikely that many of whom reading this column have not at any time encountered a Mormon missionary; A young man in his early twenties, nicely dressed with a name tag reading "Elder." It is astounding to notice the tenacity and resilience of these missionaries who each take on average two or more years in a place foreign to them working for a cause they believe in. Some might read this and ask why even cover this topic and wonder what harm these sincere folks are causing. The fact of the matter is they are teaching a damnable doctrine, wholly opposed to the doctrine of Christ.

Let's briefly look at some of the founding principles of Mormonism. The cornerstone of the Mormon church rests on the teaching that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God and that God revealed *The Book of Mormon* to him. They

claim that without this book, no one possesses the fullness of God's revelation to mankind. But Mormonism extends far beyond the appearance of a quaint, quiet religious group who are seeking to strengthen people with the Bible and its supplement, the Book of Mormon; there is much more to their cult. Ron Carlson and Ed Decker say the following in their book, *Fast Facts on False Teachers*:

"Joseph Smith, a young treasure seeker was known for his tall tales. He claimed to have uncovered the gold plates near his home in upstate New York. He is now honored by Mormons as a prophet because he claimed to have had visions for the spirit world in which he was commanded to organize the Mormon Church... By maintaining a rigid code of financial and moral

requirements, and through performing secret temple

rituals for themselves and

the dead, the Latter-Day

Saints hope to prove their

worthiness and thus

become gods. The

Mormons teach that

everyone must stand at the final judgment before Joseph

Smith, The Mormon Jesus and

Elohim. Those Mormons who are

sealed in the eternal marriage

ceremony in LDS temples expect to

become polygamous gods or their goddess

wives in the Celestial Kingdom, rule over other planets

and spawn new families throughout eternity. The

Mormons thank God for Joseph Smith, who claimed that

he had done more for us than any other man, including

Jesus Christ. The Mormons claim that he died as a martyr,

shedding his blood for us so that we too may become

gods."

As you are probably thinking, this is ridiculous. Anyone with a working knowledge of the Bible would understand that this is totally false, but this isn't the case from those who are ignorant and misinformed. The Bible is clear that there is ONE God but Mormonism claims there are many (Eph. 4). The Bible is clear that Jesus word will never pass away, but Mormonism claims the Bible is corrupted (1 Pet. 1:22-23). The Bible is clear that if anyone were to preach a Gospel other than the one sent out by Christ, they would accursed, but Mormonism claims that the Book of Mormon is another Gospel of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:6-9). The Bible is clear that burnt offerings and sacrifices under the Old Law were done by priests of the tribe of Levi, but Mormonism claims that King Benjamin and the Nephites who were supposedly descendants of the tribe of

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The Cost of Eternity

In 1974 a small group of farmers digging a well in the Shaanxi Province accidentally uncovered the tomb of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty. The plot stretched over an area of almost 22 square miles. At center was an underground palace that was the Emperor's final resting place. Ancient writings reveal the palace as being a replica of the Emperor's earthly residence. During his life he reproduced the entire Chinese empire on a miniature scale. It contained rivers, lakes, and jewels that represented the sun, moon, & stars. It was built with the idea that the Emperor could see his kingdom for eternity.

The first act of Qin Shi Huang, before he was made Emperor, was to make preparations for his afterlife by beginning construction of the tomb. He enlisted the help of 700,000 laborers who took over 36 years erecting the underground city. The army was comprised of over 7,000 cavalry troops, chariots, & horses. Since then the tomb has been called the "Necropolis of the Dead" or "Metropolis of the Dead." Surrounding the tomb are the Terra Cotta Warriors, or tomb warriors. More than 6,000 were built as a "spirit army." Their purpose was to protect the tomb and the Emperor beyond the grave. The original warriors stood six feet tall. Each statue was brightly painted and armed with a crossbow, sword, or other weapon. There were no two exactly alike. Each had unique details to their armor, dress, and personality. Some archaeologists believe the figures were modeled after real warriors. Other Emperors eventually followed Emperor Qin, creating their own armies. Qin Shi Huang spent a great fortune and much time to prepare for life beyond this one. Though his beliefs did not match what the Bible teaches, there is an insightful lesson to be learned about looking ahead. The Hebrews writer spends a portion of his letter describing the faith of many men and women who understood preparation comes with a valuable price.

Salvation Cost Abel a Proper Offering

The Lord's command for the disposition of giving has always been clear. It was no different for the first siblings on earth. The Hebrews writer notes, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts..." (Heb 11:4). By implication both were instructed to offer a sacrifice. There are some who wonder why Abel's was accepted and Cain's was not, even questioning the fairness in how God responds. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd (Gen 4:2). Both

had an important responsibility. Though some accuse Cain of not having a sincere heart, consider he was not wroth until after his offering was rejected.

Since God is not a respecter of persons, the text needs to be examined. It should be realized that the purpose of the Lord's judgment was not in *what* was given, but *how* it was given. Abel offered "By faith." Paul confirms, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17). Abel's giving was "more excellent" because he did it according to God's instruction. This is a valuable lesson to be learned today as God's authority is discussed. God cares about how He is worshipped. The only way to be right with God is to do what He wants. Bible authority must always be carefully followed.

Salvation Cost Enoch His Compliance

Not much is known of Enoch, yet the Holy Spirit thought his life and account was important enough to record in holy writ. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:4, 5). Moses writes, "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen 5:21-24).

Enoch was translated out of this world because of his compliance to God. He walked with Him. He pleased Him. As the Hebrews writer emphasizes, this can not be done without faith. Faith is necessary to please God. Those who obey the word of God will be translated out of the kingdom of darkness; it is a spiritual translation. Paul writes, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13, 14). God keeps His promise, but there must be action on the part of the hearer to comply.

Salvation Cost Noah His Conformity

It is sobering to think that the only thing that saved the entire human race was the obedience of a family of eight. The Hebrew writer informs, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the

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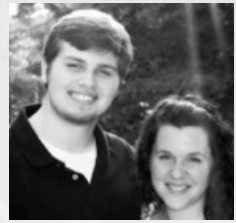
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Manasseh could offer burnt offerings and sacrifices according to the law of Moses (Mosiah 2:3 in the Book of Mormon; consider the entirety of the book of Leviticus in the Bible).

This cannot be an exhaustive study, but I recommend that you seek out ways of educating yourself further in this subject so that we can *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is within us with meekness and fear* (1 Pet. 3:15). I

thank God that He has not left us helpless, but that He has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness in His word (2 Pet. 1:3). May the purity and perfection of His Book be known to all people and may the errors of men be extinguished to the glory of God!

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Upcoming

I'd like to take a moment and tell of some changes that will be rolling out for the Preacher's Favorite Passage in 2014. We are very excited about these things and hopefully they will encourage our readers in the Way more and more.

Bi-Monthly

Starting in 2014, The Preacher's Favorite Passage will transition to a bi-monthly publication. This will enable us to run more ads, have more featured writers and possibly add to the number of recurring columns in each issue. Because of that, instead of a goal of 12-15 pages per issue, our editors will have the goal of almost 40 pages per issue!

New Design

Along with our increased content, there will be a new type of design for the upcoming issues! Look for more images in the coming months along with a fresh new style to the overall issue.

More Blogs

As the main blogger of the PFP's blog (www.thepfp.weebly.com/blog), I will be posting even more content with different types of posts, more textual studies, and maybe even some other interesting topics!

Rubies

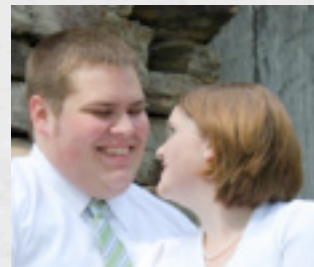
It has been advertised in the PFP a few times, with varying dates of release. But in 2014 Rubies, an e-zine specifically designed for ladies, will be part of the Preacher's Favorite Passage website.

Rubies will also be a bi-monthly e-zine with some of the same types of studies but with added content specifically designed to help the Christian woman!

These are just a few of the new additions to our work with The Preacher's Favorite Passage that will be rolling out in 2014. If you are interested in more information about these things... *stay tuned!*



Lee Snow is the preacher for the Gray Church of Christ in Gray, GA. He is the Editor of the PFP.



righteousness which is by faith” (Heb 11:7). Righteousness is a standard of one’s relationship with God.

There is no record that Noah had seen a flood before but God told him it would destroy the world. Then he was commanded to build an ark. How did he know what an ark was, much less how to build it and what dimensions it had to be? God told him how to escape the flood and he did it. Further, for 120 years he tried to persuade a nation that rejected God’s laws.

It is worth mentioning that Noah did not believe that faith only would be enough to save them. God promised they would endure a global disaster as long as Noah conformed to what had been instructed. Likewise God though His word offers how to prepare for the judgment day. The Lord judged the world by condemnation and righteousness. So will He upon Christ’s return.

Salvation Cost Abraham His Confidence

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:8-10). It is good to be firm in belief, but some are so grounded that they are not willing to move when the Lord prompts. Through confidence comes patience.

Abraham never saw in his physical existence the fulfillment of the promise that all nations would be blessed through his seed. However, he still did not question or doubt God. He was obedient. The magnitude of what Abraham was asked to do and how he responded is often underestimated. He trusted God to the extent that he left no room to be distracted by his own reasoning. And he did it without himself even receiving the inheritance.

Salvation Cost Moses His Courage

Moses had an opportunity to live a life of luxury in the Pharaoh’s palace yet refused. He chose a different life that perhaps made him the most pivotal figure in the Jews’ history.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the

reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned (Heb 11:24-29).

He received valuable training by his mother, saying “no” to evil and “yes” to good. His faith was illustrated by his obedience and participation in God’s ordained laws. His courage matched his devotion. He did not once fear Pharaoh, even knowing the military muscle that pursued. Had the Israelites not marched out of slavery and gone forward through the Red Sea, they would have died in Egypt. Moses caused them to realize that they had to do something. God was going to deliver them, but only if they obeyed.

Moses describes their dramatic journey to freedom: “And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea” (Exo 15:8). Not only did God cause the waters to stand upright, but He changed the very nature of liquid into a congealed (gelatinous, curdled) form. He thickened the water. The first thing Moses did when they reached the other side was sing a song to the Lord (Exo 15). None of this would be possible without the courage of a man who understood what God could and would do. What a valuable lesson to be learned that when God is followed, there is hope.

Salvation Cost Many Their Conviction

And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were



Has it been one month already? It is beginning to look a lot like the holiday of Thanksgiving. This is one of my favorite holidays. Please let me urge you to be safe over the next few weeks. I hope you and your family have a great time together.

Let me continue to encourage you to study and ask those question that you have a difficulty in answering. I do not have all the answers but if you and I open our minds and Bibles, we can find the answers from God's holy and matchless word. Let's get a Bible and dig in!

1. *There are some that claim that the local congregation CANNOT support ANY SORT of social event other than worship on Sunday or Bible study on Wednesday. Is this a Biblical view or is this going where the Bible has not?*

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THIS FACT: It does not matter what any or every person claims. It only matters what God's desire is and my desire to fulfill it.

As we reason through this question (Isa.1.18) we will concentrate on the words of this question.

This first thing, in this question, that pops out to me is the idea that worship and Bible study is a social event. While there is some social interaction when we meet for worship and Bible study, social interaction IS NOT the point of worship or Bible study. Worship and Bible study are designed to bring glory and honor unto God Almighty. It is also designed to bring truth into my life. We must not fall into the trap of the idea that worship is a social event.

If this idea of supporting any sort of social event is against the Word of God, then that would imply that Jesus was acting sinfully in John 2. You will recall He was invited to and attended a wedding, a social event. If Christ can attend a social event, so can we.

Then we would have to ask the question, can we have meals together, a social event? Can we give out water and tracts at our local community events, a social event? We are commanded to be in the world not of the world (John 17, Romans 12). We cannot teach those who we never come into contact with. We cannot contact others if we never go into a social environment.

The idea that the church cannot do anything social is not a Biblical view. To be focused only on social events as the

church is also not a Biblical view. We must be balanced, in order to teach the Gospel (2 Corinthians 5.11)

Let me give you a good book to read on this subject: Muscle and a Shovel- Michael Shank. He is a brother in Christ and this book is a great read. (It is a free download on Kindle)

2. *Is there a certain way in which the 5 acts of worship are to be done within the worship service today?*

YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES! YES!

There is a certain way every action of worship is to be done. According to Bible, the New Testament church only has 5 actions in her worship unto God. They are as follows: Singing, Prayer, Study, Giving and the Lord's Supper.

Notice the regulations:

Singing- Matthew 26.30, Mark 14.26, Acts 16.25, Romans 15.9, 1 Corinthians 14.15, Hebrews 2.12, Ephesians 5.19, James 5.13, Colossians 3.16, Hebrews 13.15. We must sing the correct songs. We must sing only.

Prayer- Acts 16.13,2.42, James 4.2, Colossians 1.9, Matthew 15.36. We need to pray in devotion, petitions, pleading and thanksgiving.

Study- 2 Timothy 4.1-4, Acts 5.39-42, 2 Timothy 2.2, Jude 23. We need to teach the good news of the salvation of man through Jesus Christ. We cannot stop or change that gospel. We teach those things approved by God. We teach to keep folks from an eternity in Hell

Giving- 1 Corinthians 16.1-2, 2 Corinthians 9.6-8. We must give every Sunday, as we have been prospered by God. God love a cheerful giver.

Lord's Supper- Luke 22.29-30, Matthew 26.26-28, Acts 20.7. We must eat this memorial every Sunday. It was established by Jesus with the elements of the Passover-unleavened bread and unleavened grape juice.

With all these things in mind, we also need to realize that you and I must also worship with the proper attitude- John 4.24.

WORSHIP ANY OTHER WAY OR WITH ANY OTHER ATTITUDE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BY GOD.

I hope this study has been as profitable for you as it has been for me. Remember our mindset as we study "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." 1st Thessalonians 5.21

Billy Hayes preaches for the Fairview Road Church of Christ in Gadsden, AL. He also directs a week of youth camp at Indian Creek Youth Camp.

Bread Enough & to Spare

The hungry prodigal knew his rich father wouldn't go to bed without supper that night. *He would.* The more he thought of it, it dawned on him that *nobody* on his father's farm would fall asleep with a growling stomach. *He would.* Even his father's servants had "bread enough and to spare" (Lk. 15:17). *He didn't.*

Since the *father* in the parable represents the *Father* in the Bible, we can draw some interesting conclusions from the phrase—"bread enough and to spare." God has never been stingy with His blessings. He "...giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not" (Jas. 1:5; cf. 1:17). Take *bread* for instance. When Israel's children needed some in the wilderness, they had all the manna they wanted: "Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer² for every man..." (Ex. 16:16). When a widow shared what she thought was her last meal with Elijah, God refilled her meal barrel and—no matter how much she dipped out—it stayed full until the famine ended (1 Kgs. 17:15, 16). When Jesus fed five thousand men (plus women and children), the famished people ate all they wanted and still had twelve baskets left (Mt. 14:20). When He "opened His buffet" to four thousand another day, they, too, ate their fill³ and had seven baskets extra (Mt. 15:37).⁴

When we think of man, and see the magnitude of his sin, we can hardly understand how a single sinner can be saved; but when we think of God, and see the magnitude of His love, we can hardly understand how a single one could be lost. Have you considered that God loved sinners better than He loved His own Son? "*How can you say that,*" you ask? "He...spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all..." (Rm. 8:32), but He spares sinners. He poured out His wrath upon His Son and made Him (the Innocent) the substitute for sinners, that He might lavish love upon us (the guilty) who deserved His anger.

Since God "freely gives us all things" (Rm. 8:32) and withholds "no good thing...from them that walk uprightly" (Psa. 84:11), what can we count on when we make the journey back to our Father from the far country?

"GRACE enough and to spare." No one has gotten up from God's table still needing a snack of grace. Is your case a difficult one? Have your sins been shocking and frequent? Are your spiritual diseases strange and complex? Consider He who made the earth, stretched out the heavens like a tent to

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THE BEST PART

The best part of anything having to do with the Bible and the divine God in Heaven is the fact that He has provided a way by which a man can be saved from his sins. Paul wrote that every single person, attempting to justify himself by way of his own means, has fallen short of the mark and has therefore been guilty of trespasses (Romans 3:23). But, thanks be to God, He has not left us alone in order to find our salvation! He has sent Himself, in Jesus Christ, to die on a cross for the forgiveness of all man's sins (John 3:16). BUT, we have to access that salvation which is freely available. How does someone do that?

Hear - Romans 10:17

Believe - John 8:24

Repent - Acts 2:38

Confess - Romans 10:9-10

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16

If you have not done these things, or have never even heard such things, please contact us at the PFP. We would love to help you in your spiritual life so that you can be accepted by the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9).

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

When we lived in Memphis, it became a regular practice for me to read a Brothers Grimm fairy tale to my daughter, Lilly Mae. For those who do not know, the Brothers Grimm were the original publishers (although probably not the original story-tellers) of such popular stories as The Princess and the Frog, Cinderella, and Snow White. You might be more familiar with these stories as Disney movies. Whether known as short-stories or movies, most of these stories end in the same words —“And they all lived happily ever after.”

As a citizen of America in the 21st Century, one thing is painfully obvious—these stories were written a long time ago. If these tales were written in our generation, Repunzel would be asked to let down her hair so that the prince could come up and fornicate with her, half of the “prince charmings” would be looking for another prince charming, the princess would have asked the frog how much he was worth prior to kissing him, and the majority of stories would end with “And they never got married, but they enjoyed living together for many years to come,” or “And they later divorced for irreconcilable differences.”

Let’s face it folks—our society is messed up! I could spend considerable time on each of the things listed above, and many more, but society has not shown its corruption any more than in the widespread approach to marriage. God was the original author of “Happily Ever After.” His intent was 1 man, 1 woman, 1 lifetime (Gen. 2:23-24). Woman was created as a help-meet for man, indicating she was there to make him happy (Gen. 2:20). Man is also commanded to love, help, and protect his wife (Eph. 5:25). We have turned marriage into a relationship for personal gain, rather than what God intended it to be. It is no longer “Happily Ever After.”

The word “happily” cannot be used in reference to the majority of modern marriages. The reason for this: selfishness. God created marriage so that each person would make the other happy. Somehow, we have forgotten that. That is the main reason many marriages

fail, and those who do not fail are usually miserable. If each person in a marriage strives to make himself/herself happy, you will have two unhappy people in a marriage. If a wife strives to please her husband, but he does not care to reciprocate, you have an unhappy wife and a happy husband. If a husband tries his best to make his wife happy, but she cares only for her own happiness, she will be happy, but he will be miserable. Only in a situation where each spouse puts the other first can you have true happiness. Because we ignore this, most modern fairy tales lose the “happily” and are left with just “ever after.”

As if that were not bad enough, many of today’s fairy tales lose the “ever” also. I am unfamiliar with the current statistics, but considerably more than half of marriages end in divorce. That is not what God intended! “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat 19:6). God commanded that we not divorce. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). We sin when we divorce our God-given spouse.

These two things mentioned, for many it is no longer “Happily Ever After,” but just “After.” Unfortunately many marriages end. Many are left wondering what to do “after.” That depends on what happened before. If the marriage ended because your spouse committed adultery, you have the right to remarry (Mt. 19:9). If the marriage ended for any other reason, you may not remarry. If you divorce and then your former-spouse commits adultery, you have to remain unmarried. You may think that is too hard of a commandment to follow; so did Christ’s apostles (Mt. 19:10). Nobody said it was going to be easy (Mt. 19:12), but very little of true Christianity is easy. The good news for anyone who finds themselves in the “after” stage of their fairy tale is that there is a possibility to get it back. Whether you were put away scripturally or unscripturally, you can return to your original spouse if they will take you back and haven’t yet moved on to another (1 Cor. 7:11). If you cannot go back to your original spouse, just live your life right from that day forward. You can be forgiven by God and live alone.



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dwell in, has no bound to His strength, nor limit to His might.⁵ In ten billion years,⁶ He has never failed at anything—will His first failure be saving you? Will you prove too strong for omnipotence, boggle the omniscient mind, or be unlovable for omnibenevolence? If He made you (Gen. 1:28), He can remake you (2 Cor. 5:17). If He claims you (2 Cor. 6:18), He can cleanse you (Acts 22:16). “His hand is not shortened that it cannot save...” (Isa. 59:1).

After all these years, is there still “bread enough” on God’s table of grace? Isaiah issued this invitation twenty-seven centuries ago: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (55:7). It still stands. God offers “abundant grace” (2 Cor. 4:15) and “abundant mercy” (1 Pet. 1:3; cf. Tit. 3:5, 6), yea, “exceeding abundant” (1 Tim. 1:14); He is able “to save them *to the uttermost*” that come to Him (Heb. 7:25). Peter said, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you **abundantly**⁸ into the everlasting kingdom...” (2 Pet. 1:11). Paul’s concluded: “Where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound⁹” (Rm. 5:20).

Let’s put this “plenteous grace” to the test in a real world of really bad sinners. Did God live up to His promises?

- ▶ The publicans and sinners were acknowledged (by others) and admitted (by themselves) notorious transgressors of God’s Law. Yet when they came to Jesus they always found “grace enough and to spare” (cf. Lk. 15:1, 2). More than any other group, they satiated themselves with the Bread of Life (Jn. 8:12; cf. Mt. 9:10, 11; 11:19; Mk. 2:15, 16; Lk. 5:30; 7:34).
- ▶ Take the cases of the sinful woman whose reputation (quite literally) followed her (Lk. 7:36-50) and the woman who got caught in bed with someone not her husband (Jn. 8:1-11). Would grace cover such scandal? Yes! Both found that Jesus had grace enough to cover their fleshly—but forsaken—sins.
- ▶ What about a trader—one of the inner circle who forsook the Lord “with his eyes open,” even after he had been warned (Mt. 26:34)? Peter was all these; he denied his Master three times the night the Friend of Sinners most needed a friend. He cursed and swore that he did not even know “the man” (Mt. 26:72). Could grace cover such a high-handed misdemeanor? Yes. Jesus forgave Peter. But surely

he was on probation; certainly he was counted second-rate ... damaged goods. No, less than two months later, Jesus tapped him to be the keynote speaker at the greatest revival of all time (Acts 2). He featured him as the key character of the first half of Acts of Apostles, used him to write two Scripture books, and placed him as an elder in a local congregation (1 Pet. 5:1, 2).

- ▶ Those on whose hands God saw crimson stains that matched His Son’s blood-type were told: “Repent, and be baptized **every one of you** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). Three thousand of them washed their hands “in the fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins” that very day (2:41; cf. Zec. 13:1), and many others took Him up on His offer in coming weeks (2:47). It would be hard to imagine a case today that could be the equal of the Pentecost sinners.
- ▶ What about moral delinquents? Without doubt pervers and swindlers and drunks are not welcome at the Father’s banquet, right? Again, we find they are—provided they’re penitent. Paul wrote of some who had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals,¹⁰ thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners (1 Cor. 6:9, 10). But, by God’s grace, they had been “washed... sanctified...justified” (6:11).



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sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise

All of this was done by faith. There were great men of war who subdued kingdoms. There were prophets like David who refused to submit to edicts. There were some who would not kneel to pagan gods. Their faith sustained them and drove them to stand on the battlefield of righteousness. They were pillars of godly behavior, even though they did not receive the promise of the Messiah during their lifetime.

Conclusion

The Hebrew writer continues, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us..." (Heb 11:40 – 12:1). The Hebrew Christians

were reminded that they would receive the promise. They were beneficiaries of what Heaven bestows and did everything by faith. Those who want the same are without excuse. How many will place their faith in the Lord? How many will not lose sight that preparation for heaven begins on earth?

Nathan Franson, once a member of the Latter Day Saints, has a number of helpful tools available to help individuals understand the Mormon doctrine and preach the Truth to those in that religion.

If you are interested in more information about these products, please contact us at The PFP (www.thepfp.weebly.com or thepfp@live.com).



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