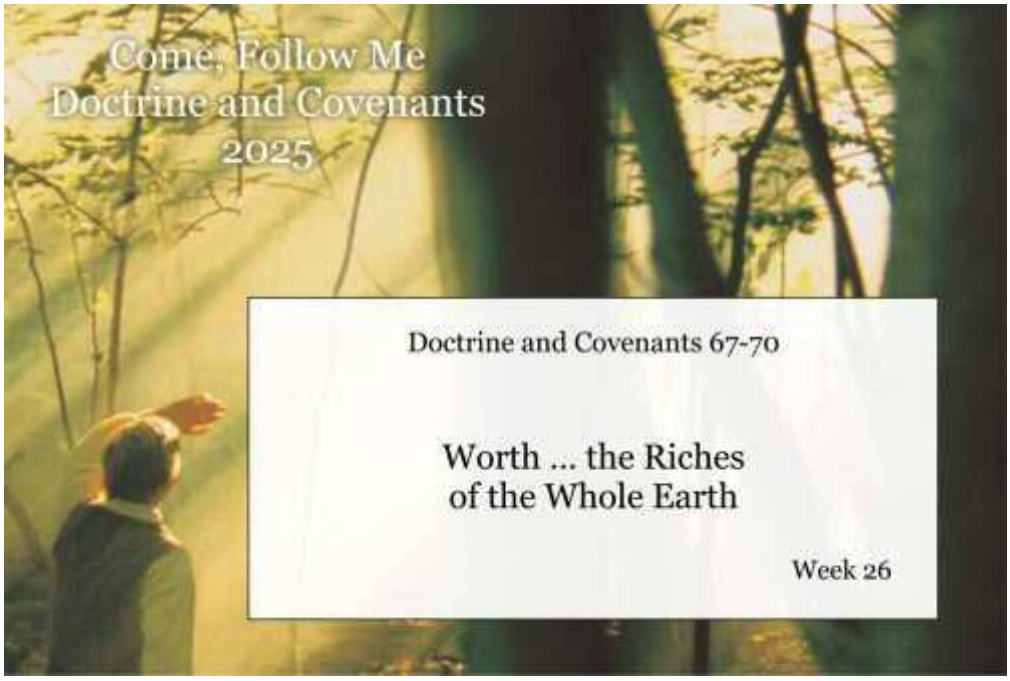

Any one truth from Christ's gospel, if that truth leads to the safety of our soul, is truly worth all "the riches of the whole earth."

There is much in this week's lessons for us to study. I have chosen one main topic that drew me in. Be sure to read the whole week's lesson and find those things that you need for your own personal growth.

Doctrine and Covenants 67:1-9

Revelation

Let's look at sources of revelation. In the verses listed below the Lord is taking issue with the members of the church who are calling into question Joseph Smith's revelations, because they didn't like that they were not "perfect" in the way he wrote them. The Lord is reminding them that He speaks to us in our own language according to our understanding. Perfection is not even a consideration. All God is concerned with is communicating the truth to us - in any way we will understand it and accept it. How God communicates with us is up to us. What are we willing to listen to and accept? We might well consider this approach when we deal with each other (thinking especially of my children).

> 1 Behold and hearken, O ye elders of my church, who have assembled yourselves together, whose prayers I have heard, and whose hearts I know, and whose desires have come up

> before me.
>
> 2 Behold and lo, mine eyes are upon you, and the heavens and the earth are in mine hands, and the riches of eternity are mine to give.

Sorry for the break in thought here. I love Christ's statement that "the riches of eternity are mine to give." Christ doesn't come to us as just a messenger of someone with real authority. Christ IS the authority. God made him that way so we would take him and his messages seriously. The universe and all it contains really is Christ's property, and what he chooses to do with it is up to him. We should be taking him seriously when he speaks to us. God has made Jesus our supreme authority when it comes to the disposition of our souls.

> 3 Ye endeavored to believe that ye should receive the blessing which was offered unto you; but behold, verily I say unto you there were fears in your hearts, and verily this is the reason that ye did not receive.

Lip service undermines our obedience. If we don't really believe with all our heart and soul then it shows in times of trial and tribulation as fear. We cannot expect to receive the promised blessings and support of the Lord if we are afraid he won't come through in a pinch. We need to become confident that no matter what happens God is always there for us, and will always support us in our righteous endeavors. This confidence is what the Saints lacked, so the Lord withheld the blessings. They didn't really trust him, and it was manifested in the form of fear. The scriptures tell us that perfect love casteth out all fear. When our love for God becomes unshakable then we won't have any fear of men and what they can do to us.

> 4 And now I, the Lord, give unto you a testimony of the truth of these commandments which are lying before you.
>
> 5 Your eyes have been upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and his language you have known, and his imperfections you have known; and you have sought in your hearts knowledge that you might express beyond his language; this you also know.
>
> 6 Now, seek ye out of the Book of Commandments, even the least that is among them, and appoint him that is the most wise among you;
>
> 7 Or, if there be any among you that shall make one like unto it, then ye are justified in saying that ye do not know that they are true;

> 8 But if ye cannot make one like unto it, ye are under condemnation if ye do not bear record that they are true.
>
> 9 For ye know that there is no unrighteousness in them, and that which is righteous cometh down from above, from the Father of lights.

Paraphrase of 4-9 - You all know my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. You have the commandments I have given him sitting before you, but you are hung up on what you perceive as imperfections of the man tainting the words I have given him. Fine. Pick your wisest person to write a revelation that is better than even the weakest revelation Joseph has written. If you can do it then I justify you in not believing the truth of what he has written. If you can't then be quiet and testify of the truthfulness of what my servant has given you. You know full well that there is no unrighteousness in his words, so I will condemn you if you don't bear record of their truthfulness, for all righteousness comes from God.

Lessons

We tend to look at the verses above and think, "Boy, they sure were gutsy to question God's servant when he presented the words of the Lord to them. They even attempted to out do Joseph and write their own revelation, but couldn't do it. God sure showed them." But how many times have I, personally said to myself, "Brother, these sections all start the same way. It seems lame that Joseph started each one with some dramatic opener about God's word being sharp like a two-edged sword." Aren't I just as guilty as these people who openly accused Joseph of being deficient as a prophet?

I go back to my comment earlier. God speaks to us in ways we can understand His words. How many of us repeat certain phrases when we pray? Don't make excuses! You know we all do it. Why can't Joseph start a revelation with something that is familiar to him as the Spirit kicks in and moves him in what else to say? It happens to all of us when we bless someone else or when we begin our prayers with things that are similar to what we have said before. The Spirit then begins to enlighten our minds and we start to pray for what is actually the most important things we should consider. The Lord is working with us according to our understanding and our language.

Speaking by the Spirit

Here is Doctrine and Covenants 68:3-6. Please read these verses. I'll talk about them after you read them. God is referring to those who have been called and set apart to preach His gospel.

> 3 And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost.
>
> 4 And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation.
>
> 5 Behold, this is the promise of the Lord unto you, O ye my servants.
>
> 6 Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.

Unlike any other dispensation of time, we are each and all of us called by the covenants we have made with God to stand as witnesses of Christ in all places and at all times. All of us are in possession of the gift of the Holy Ghost, which enables us to speak through His influence and convey the mind and will of God to someone else. When we bear our testimony to anyone, in any form, the Spirit then witnesses to them that what we have told them is the truth. That truth IS the mind and will of God that He wants them to know. They have to know this in order to make the choice to come to Christ. Sound like a grave responsibility? It is. It is also a joy and a privilege that comes with making covenants.

Our problem is that we fear. What we fear, and how much we fear is different for each of us. Look again at verse 6 above. Christ says, "do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you." Our baptismal covenant requires us to "bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come." That was just our first covenant. All our other covenants add exalting behaviors on top of this first requirement. This is the process of exaltation. It is all centered around Christ and his mission to save each of us. This one thing requires our absolute confidence, for it is the center of all our worship and doctrine.

Do I still fear? Yes, I do. Am I working on it? Painfully slowly. But the more I learn to love and trust my Savior, the less I fear and the more confidence I have in the Spirit.

Confidence in the Spirit

It can be a difficult thing to understand our own imperfections and weaknesses, and still have complete confidence in the influences we receive from the Holy Ghost. When He moves us to do something or to say something; when He gives us feelings or opens views to our mind that we couldn't have received any other way, in these things we can have complete confidence. We just need to learn when He is speaking to us, so we know it is from God. When we know that what we are doing or saying is from the Spirit then we shouldn't fear the consequences of acting upon that knowledge. God will always support His own words, and it is the Spirit's responsibility to give those words to us as we share God's reality and influence with others.

We may not see where our actions will take us in the future, but we can have every confidence in those actions here and now, because the Spirit inspired them in us. We are just doing what we feel right in doing. God will do the rest. I repeat part of verse 6. "Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you."

Don't let what might happen in the future deter you from doing what you feel is right in the present. Let God deal with that in His own way. This is where people's fear so often cause them to lose out on the promised blessings. We see all the influences of the world, and we fear men more than God, so we keep quiet, or we don't do what the Spirit is encouraging us to do. Our fear is what is holding us back from receiving the blessings that bring the greatest amount of joy.

Personal note

When I go to a movie, especially one that involves fantasy, like Harry Potter, for example, I enjoy the movie because I am able to suspend my disbelief. I know this isn't real, but I accept for the moment that it is real, and that in this world these fanciful things are happening. I enjoy the story. This also can be used in the gospel of Christ.

When I feel moved upon to say something to someone or feel a need to do something that seems out of character for me to do, I can also suspend my disbelief or incredulity, if I choose to do so. When I am able to suspend my disbelief, because for now I accept that this is real and what the Spirit (and hence God) is telling me I need to do then I can do so with confidence and joy in the act and moment I am in. I'm not saying that God

and His work is fantasy. That is just my example of how we already choose to suspend our disbelief in one thing, so why not put aside our natural fears and trust God when He encourages us to do good?

Doing good in any form and way always brings happiness to someone. Goodness is the foundation of happiness. That is why God is the source of all that is good. We can have confidence in the nature of goodness. Our testimony and the sharing of that testimony should be at least partially based on our belief that it has come to us because of the goodness of God. Sharing that goodness will increase our happiness, and it can bring happiness to the person receiving it, if they will receive it. This is the nature of God's goodness. The more we experience it the more confidence (and the less fear) we will have in it. We need to learn to enjoy sharing the goodness of God with others. What form that goodness takes is immaterial. Goodness is goodness, and it all comes from God. What the Spirit tells us to do and say is just another form of God's goodness and love for His children. Run with it and be happy.

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