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By Elder Kevin S. Hamilton
Of the Seventy

As we humble ourselves and exercise faith in Jesus Christ, the grace of Christ and His infinite atoning sacrifice make it possible to change.

President Thomas S. Monson once shared the story of prison warden Clinton Duffy. “During the 1940s and 1950s, [Warden Duffy] was well known for his efforts to rehabilitate the men in his prison. Said one critic, ‘You should know that leopards don’t change their spots!’

“Replied Warden Duffy, ‘You should know I don’t work with leopards. I work with men, and men change every day.’”¹

One of Satan’s greatest lies is that men and women cannot change. This untruth gets told and retold in many different ways as the world says that we simply cannot change—or worse yet, that we should not change. We are taught that our circumstances define us. We should “embrace who we really are,” the world says, “and be authentic to our true selves.”

We Can Change

While it is indeed good to be authentic, we should be authentic to our real, true selves as sons and daughters of God with a divine nature and destiny to become like Him.² If our goal is to be authentic to this divine nature and destiny, then we will all need to change. The scriptural word for change is *repentance*. “Too many people,” President Russell M. Nelson teaches, “consider repentance as punishment—something to be avoided except in the most serious circumstances. ... When Jesus asks you and me to ‘repent,’ He is inviting us to change.”³

God’s Conditions

Computer software developers use conditional statements to tell computers what to do. These are sometimes referred to as if-then statements. As in, if x is true, then do

y.

The Lord also operates through conditions: conditions of faith, conditions of righteousness, conditions of repentance. There are many examples of conditional statements from God such as:

"If you keep my commandments and endure to the end [*then*] you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God."⁴

Or "*if* ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, [*then*] he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost."⁵

Even God's love, although infinite and perfect, is also subject to conditions.⁶ For example:

"If ye keep my commandments, [*then*] ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."⁷

Elder D. Todd Christofferson further expounded on this gospel truth when he taught: "Some are wont to say, 'The Savior loves me just as I am,' and that is certainly true. But He cannot take any of us into His kingdom just as we are, 'for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence' [Moses 6:57]. Our sins must first be resolved."⁸

Weak Things Can Become Strong

The blessing of receiving God's power to help us change is also conditional. The Savior, speaking through the prophet Moroni in the Book of Mormon, taught: "If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."⁹

Looking more closely at what the Lord is teaching us here, we see that He first says that He gives men and women *weakness*, singular, which is part of our mortal experience as fallen or carnal beings. We have become natural men and women because of the Fall of Adam. But through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can overcome our weakness, or our fallen natures.

He then says that His grace is sufficient and that *if* we will humble ourselves and have faith in Him, *then* He will "make weak *things* [plural] become strong unto [us]." In other words, as we first change our fallen natures, our weakness, then we will be able to change our behaviors, our weaknesses.

Requirements of Change

Let's review the requirements to change according to the Lord's pattern:

First, we must humble ourselves. The Lord’s condition for change is humility. “*If they humble themselves before me,*”¹⁰ He said. The opposite of humility is pride. Pride exists when we think we know better—when what *we* think or feel takes priority over what *God* thinks or feels.

King Benjamin taught that “the natural man is an enemy to God, ... and will be, forever and ever, unless he ... putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, [and] humble.”¹¹

In order to change, we need to put off the natural man and become humble and submissive. We must be humble enough to follow a living prophet. Humble enough to make and keep temple covenants. Humble enough to repent daily. We must be humble enough to want to change, to “yield our hearts unto God.”¹²

Second, we must have faith in Jesus Christ. Again, the words of the Savior: “If they humble themselves before me, *and have faith in me,*”¹³ He will give us the power to overcome our weaknesses. Humility, coupled with faith in Jesus Christ, will allow us to access the enabling power of His grace and the fulness of blessings available because of His Atonement.

President Nelson has taught that “true repentance begins with faith that Jesus Christ has the power to cleanse, heal, and strengthen us. ... It is *our* faith that unlocks the power of God in *our* lives.”¹⁴

Third, through His grace He can make weak things become strong. *If* we humble ourselves and have faith in Jesus Christ, *then* His grace will enable us to change. In other words, He will empower us to change. This is possible because, as He says, “my grace is sufficient for all men.”¹⁵ His strengthening, enabling grace gives us power to overcome *all* obstacles, *all* challenges, and *all* weaknesses as we seek to change.

Our greatest weaknesses can become our greatest strengths. We can be changed and “become new creatures.”¹⁶ Weak things literally can “become strong unto [us].”¹⁷

The Savior worked out His infinite and eternal Atonement so that we could in fact change, repent, and become better. We can actually be born again. We can overcome habits, addictions, and even the “disposition to do evil.”¹⁸ As sons and daughters of a loving Father in Heaven, we have the power within us to change.

Examples of Change

The scriptures are full of examples of men and women who changed.

Saul, a Pharisee and active persecutor of the early Christian church,¹⁹ became Paul, an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Alma was a priest in the court of wicked King Noah. He heard the words of Abinadi, fully repented, and became one of the great missionaries of the Book of Mormon.

His son Alma spent his youth seeking to destroy the Church. He was among "the very vilest of sinners"²⁰ until he had a change of heart and became a powerful missionary in his own right.

Moses was adopted into Pharaoh's family and raised in luxury as an Egyptian prince. But when he came to understand who he really was and learned of his divine destiny, he changed and became the great lawgiving prophet of the Old Testament.²¹

My wife's grandfather James B. Keysor has always impressed me with his own mighty change of heart.²² Born of faithful Latter-day Saint pioneer ancestors in the Salt Lake Valley in 1906, he lost his mother at a young age and struggled throughout his youth. His teenage and young adult years were spent away from the Church, during which time he acquired a number of bad habits. Nevertheless, he met and married a faithful woman, and together they raised five children.

In 1943, following the difficult years of the Great Depression and during World War II, Bud, as he was called by friends and family, left Utah and moved to Los Angeles, California, to look for employment. During this time away from home, he lived with his sister and her husband, who was serving as the bishop of their ward.

With the love and influence of his sister and brother-in-law, he started to revive his interest in the Church and began to read the Book of Mormon each night before going to sleep.

One night, while he was reading in Alma chapter 34, his heart was touched as he read the following words:

"Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer. ...

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors."²³

While he was reading these verses, a powerful feeling came over him and he knew that he had to change, to repent, and he knew what he must do. He got up from his bed and knelt down and began to pray, pleading with the Lord to forgive him and to give him the strength he needed to make changes in his life. His prayer was answered, and from that time forward, he never looked back. Bud went on to serve in the Church and remained a faithful, committed Latter-day Saint to the end of his life. He was changed in every way. His mind, his heart, his actions, his very being were changed.

Brothers and sisters, our divine destiny and purpose is ultimately to become like our Heavenly Father and Savior, Jesus Christ. We do this as we change, or repent. We receive the Savior's "image in [our] countenances."²⁴ We become new, clean, different, and we simply continue to work at it every day. Sometimes it may feel like

two steps forward and one step back, but we continue to humbly move forward in faith.

And as we humble ourselves and exercise faith in Jesus Christ, the grace of Christ and His infinite atoning sacrifice make it possible to change.

I witness and testify that Jesus Christ is in reality our Savior and Redeemer. His grace is indeed sufficient. I declare that He is “the way, the truth, and the life.”²⁵ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Thomas S. Monson, “See Others as They May Become,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 69.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” states that “all human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny” (ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
3. Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 14:7; emphasis added.
5. Moroni 10:4; emphasis added.
6. President Russell M. Nelson has taught: “While divine love can be called perfect, infinite, enduring, and universal, it cannot correctly be characterized as *unconditional*. The word does not appear in the scriptures. On the other hand, many verses affirm that the higher levels of love the Father and the Son feel for each of us—and certain divine blessings stemming from that love—are *conditional*” (“Divine Love,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 20–22; *Liahona*, Feb. 2003, 12–14).
7. John 15:10; emphasis added.
8. D. Todd Christofferson, “The Love of God,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2021, 16.
9. Ether 12:27.
10. Ether 12:27; emphasis added.
11. Mosiah 3:19.
12. See Helaman 3:35.
13. Ether 12:27; emphasis added.
14. Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 102.
15. Ether 12:27.
16. See Mosiah 27:24–26; see also 2 Corinthians 5:17.

17. Ether 12:27.
18. Mosiah 5:2.
19. See Acts 8:3; 26:10; Galatians 1:13; Philippians 3:6.
20. Mosiah 28:4.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:41.
22. See Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14.
23. Alma 34:31–32.
24. Alma 5:14.
25. John 14:6.