

**The Atonement, Grace and Perfection
Outline - Mike Baird**

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Doctrines & Principles

We're God's Children

- We are God's spiritual offspring
 - Romans 8:16
"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"
 - Acts 17:9
" Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God"
 - Potential to be like him and receive "all that he hath"

We Require Grace to Return to Heavenly Father

- Grace is a divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ (Bible Dictionary)
- 2 Nephi 25:23
 - "for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do"
- Moroni 10:32
 - "Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ"

The Commandment – Be Perfect

- Matt 5:48 (3 Nephi 12:48)
"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"
- 3 Nephi 27:27
"what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am"
- Ephesians 4:13
"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, ..., unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"

What do we mean by perfection?

- Having no flaw or error
 - Clearly only Christ is perfect by this definition
 - Romans 3:23
"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"
- Having all flaws or errors removed
- Complete, finished fully developed (Matt 5:48 footnote)
 - Elder Russel M Nelson:
"In Matt. 5:48, the term perfect was translated from the Greek teleios, which means "complete." Teleios is an adjective derived from the noun telos, which means "end." The infinitive form of the verb is teleiono, which means "to reach a distant end, to be fully developed, to consummate, or to finish." Please note that the word does not imply "freedom from error"; it implies "achieving a distant objective." In fact, when writers of the Greek

New Testament wished to describe perfection of behavior—precision or excellence of human effort—they did not employ a form of teleios; instead, they chose different words." ("Perfection Pending," Ensign, Nov. 1995, 86)

- Do we have to be perfect to be exalted?
 - Yes we must be clean
 - D&C 1:31
"I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance"
 - Also 1 Ne. 10:21; Alma 7:21; 3 Ne. 27:19; Moses 6:57

Acquiring a Christ like nature – attaining divine perfection

- No other way nor name given
 - W. Jeffrey Marsh:
"When the focus is on perfecting ourselves, somehow the importance of the Atonement is left out of the repentance and cleansing process." ("Be Ye Therefore Perfect..."—Handling Obsession with Perfection, Women's Services and Resources Addictions Conference held at Brigham Young University, 6 February 2002)
- What do we need to understand then?

Perfection not in this life

- Jesus the only one to be perfect in this life!
- Joseph Smith
"When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave." (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 348)
- Joseph Fielding Smith
"Salvation does not come all at once; we are commanded to be perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. It will take us ages to accomplish this end, for there will be greater progress beyond the grave, and it will be there that the faithful will overcome all things, and receive all things, even the fulness of the Father's glory. I believe the Lord meant just what he said: that we should be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. That will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then not as long as we live in this mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and shall be like God. But here we lay the foundation." (Doctrines of Salvation 2:18)

Enter the gate and endure to the end

- 2 Nephi 31:15-21

"that unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved."

"..For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost."

"..Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life."

"..there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved "

- 3 Nephi 15:9, 3 Nephi 27:6, 16, 19,20,22, Alma 32:13, Matt 10:22, Mark 13:13
- Bruce R McConkie

" If we keep two principles in mind we will thereby know that good and faithful members of the Church will be saved even though they are far from perfect in this life. These two principles are

(1) that this life is the appointed time for men to prepare to meet God-this life is the day of our probation; (Alma 12:27) and

(2) that the same spirit which possesses our bodies at the time we go out of this mortal life shall have power to possess our bodies in that eternal world. (Alma 34:34)

What we are doing as members of the Church is charting a course leading to eternal life. There was only one perfect being, the Lord Jesus. If men had to be perfect and live all of the law -strictly, wholly, and completely, there would be only one saved person in eternity. The prophet taught that there are many things to be done, even beyond the grave, in working out our salvation.

And so what we do in this life is chart a course leading to eternal life. That course begins here and now and continues in the realms ahead. We must determine in our hearts and in our souls, with all the power and ability we have, that from this time forward we will press on in righteousness; by so doing we can go where God and Christ are. If we make that firm determination, and are in the course of our duty when this life is over, we will continue in that course in eternity. That same spirit that possesses our bodies at the time we depart from this mortal life will have power to possess our bodies in the eternal world. If we go out of this life loving the Lord, desiring righteousness, and seeking to acquire the attributes of godliness, we will have that same spirit in the eternal world, and we will then continue to advance and

progress until an ultimate, destined day when we will possess, receive, and inherit all things. " ("The Seven Deadly Heresies," in Speeches of the Year, 1980, 78-79)

- Bruce R McConkie

"We don't need to get a complex or get a feeling that you have to be perfect to be saved. You don't. There's only been one perfect person, and that's the Lord Jesus, but in order to be saved in the Kingdom of God and in order to pass the test of mortality, what you have to do is get on the straight and narrow path - thus charting a course leading to eternal life - and then, being on that path, pass out of this life in full fellowship. I'm not saying that you don't have to keep the commandments. I'm saying you don't have to be perfect to be saved. If you did, no one would be saved... You don't have to do what Jacob said, 'Go beyond the mark.' You don't have to live a life that's truer than true. You don't have to have an excessive zeal that becomes fanatical and becomes unbalancing. What you have to do is stay in the mainstream of the Church - keeping commandments, paying your tithing, serving in the organizations of the Church, loving the Lord, staying on the straight and narrow path. If you're on that path when death comes - because this is the time and the day appointed, this the probationary estate - you'll never fall off from it, and, for all practical purposes, your calling and election is made sure." " ("The Probationary Test of Mortality," Devotional Address given at University of Utah Institute of Religion, January 10, 1982, p. 11.)

Christ - Grace for Grace

- Christ was sinless – grace was not for compensation of sin
- Grace for grace and suffering to empower personal growth
 - D&C 93:12-13
"grace for grace"
 - Hebrews 5:8-9
"being made perfect"
 - Luke 13:32
"the third day I shall be perfected"
 - Elder Russel M Nelson:
"... let us consider another highly significant statement made by the Lord. Just prior to his crucifixion, he said that on "the third day I shall be perfected." Think of that! The sinless, errorless Lord—already perfect by our mortal standards—proclaimed his own state of perfection yet to be in the future. His eternal perfection would follow his resurrection and receipt of "all power ... in heaven and in earth." The perfection that the Savior envisions for us is much more than errorless performance. It

is the eternal expectation as expressed by the Lord in his great intercessory prayer to his Father—that we might be made perfect and be able to dwell with them in the eternities ahead." ("Perfection Pending," Ensign, Nov. 1995, 86)

- Bruce Hafen:
"Jesus taught that we should be perfect as he is perfect. His experience suggests that his own developmental process was marked by his being a recipient of the Father's divine grace. His experience also shows that being free from sin is not the same thing as attaining a state of perfection." (The Broken Heart, p. 164.)
- Christ moved from a sinless (neutral) to a "completed" (exalted) state receiving grace for grace

Us - Grace for Grace

- Our relationship to Father can mirror Christ's!
 - D&C 93:19-20
"grace for grace "
- However we move negative -> neutral -> positive
 - Bruce Hafen:
"We grow in two ways—removing negative weeds and cultivating positive flowers. The Savior's grace blesses both parts—if we do our part. First and repeatedly we must uproot the weeds of sin and bad choices. It isn't enough just to mow the weeds. Yank them out by the roots, repenting fully to satisfy the conditions of mercy. But being forgiven is only part of our growth. We are not just paying a debt. Our purpose is to become celestial beings. So once we've cleared our heartland, we must continually plant, weed, and nourish the seeds of divine qualities. And then as our sweat and discipline stretch us to meet His gifts, "the flow'rs of grace appear," like hope and meekness" ("The Atonement: All for All," Ensign, May 2004, 97)
- Negative -> neutral: *Atonement* and our repentance free us from sin (neutral state)
(see justification – "Justification & Sanctification" by Mike Baird
<http://mikebaird.net/Church/GospelTopics/JustificationSanctification.pdf>)
- Neutral -> positive: *Atoning* grace can move us beyond remission of sins to perfection
 - Moroni 10:32-33
"perfected in him... by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ "

- D&C 76:69
"Just men made perfect "
- Bruce Hafen:
"Through the Holy Ghost, the Atonement makes possible certain spiritual endowments that actually purify our nature and enable us to live a more "eternal" or Godlike life." (Beauty for Ashes: The Atonement of Jesus Christ," Ensign, Apr. 1990, pg 7.)
 - Charity & Hope are both endowments of grace

A Characterization of Our Path to Perfection

- Enter the gate
 - Moroni 8:25
"first fruits of repentance is baptism; and baptism cometh by faith... fulfilling the commandments bringeth remission of sins;
- Pressing forward on the path by *yielding*, filled with faith, hope and love
 - Moroni 8:26
"And the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and because of *meekness and lowliness of heart* cometh the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter *filleth with hope and perfect love*, which love endureth by diligence unto prayer, until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God."
 - Moroni 7:48
"Pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be *filled* with this love [charity], which he hath bestowed upon *all who are true followers* of his Son, Jesus Christ. . . . "
 - Moroni 7:3-4
"I would speak unto you that are . . . the *peaceable followers of Christ*, and that have obtained a sufficient *hope* by which ye can enter into the *rest of the Lord*. . . .
I judge these things of you because of your *peaceable walk* with the children of men"
 - Alma 38:12
"See that ye *bridle all your passions*, that ye may be *filled with love*"
 - Mosiah 3:19
"He *yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit* . . . and becometh as a child, *submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to*

submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, *even as a child* doth submit to his father."

- D&C 20:31
"And we know also, that sanctification *through the grace* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, *to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength*"
- Helaman 3:35
"They did *fast and pray oft*, and did wax *stronger and stronger in their humility*, and firmer and firmer in *the faith of Christ*, unto the *filling* their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh *because of their yielding their hearts unto God*"
- Bruce Hafen:
"this is not just another list of virtues; rather, in each case, the author was describing the personal characteristics we must exhibit if we would qualify to receive such specific second-stage endowments and attributes as charity, hope, the rest of the Lord, perfection and sanctification." (Broken Heart, pg 170)
- Role of Christ – "the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice"
 - Justification – by grace
 - D. Todd Christopherson:
" Because of "the infinite virtue of His great atoning sacrifice," Jesus Christ can satisfy or "answer the ends of the law" on our behalf. Pardon comes by the grace of Him who has satisfied the demands of justice by His own suffering, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). He removes our condemnation without removing the law. We are pardoned and placed in a condition of righteousness with Him. We become, like Him, without sin. We are sustained and protected by the law, by justice. We are, in a word, justified."
("Justification and Sanctification", Ensign, June 2001, 18)
 - Sanctification – by grace and through the agency of Holy Ghost
 - Moroni 10:33
 - Charity, hope, overcoming evil desires, peace & understanding...
 - Galations 5:22-23
"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance"
- Summation

- As we become purified and perfected, moving beyond remission of sins, we change!
 - Mosiah 5:2
"because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which 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"
- Elder Dallin H Oaks:
"Final Judgment is not just an evaluation of a sum total of good and evil acts--what we have done. It is an acknowledgment of the final effect of our acts and thoughts--what we have become " ("The Challenge to Become," Ensign, Nov. 2000, 32)

How do I earn it?

- It is free – we can not earn or buy it
 - 2 Nephi 9:50, 2 Nephi 26:25
 - See "Salvation by Grace"
(<http://mikebaird.net/Church/GospelTopics/SalvationByGrace.pdf>)
- We must accept the gift
 - 2 Nephi 2:7
"broken heart and a contrite spirit"
 - D. Todd Christofferson (Of the Presidency of the Seventy)
"it is not that we earn these gifts, but rather that we choose to seek and accept" ("Justification and Sanctification", Ensign, June 2001, 18)
 - D&C 88:33
"For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift"
 - "Saving the Bees", New Era, Nov 2003, pg 10

Ideas & suggestions

Maintaining a balance between mortal realities and immortal goals

Atoning grace & spiritual gifts are available now not after perfection

- We don't have to perfect ourselves, then receive Grace
- Boyd K Packer:
"So many are like the immigrant woman who skimmed and saved and deprived herself until, by selling all of her possessions, she bought a steerage-class ticket

to America.

She rationed out the meager provisions she was able to bring with her. Even so, they were gone early in the voyage. When others went for their meals, she stayed below deck—determined to suffer through it. Finally, on the last day, she must, she thought, afford one meal to give her strength for the journey yet ahead. When she asked what the meal would cost, she was told that all of the meals had been included in the price of her ticket." (Grace Works. pg 95)

Keep the Atonement at work in our lives

- Gerald Lund (2nd Quorum of 70):
"If at times we feel weary or think that we can't do enough or do it well enough to be perfected, we have lost sight of the Atonement." (Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75))
- Robert Millet:
"Spiritual change .. [does] not come because we work harder, or longer hours. It comes as a result of working smarter, working in conjunction with the Lord God Omnipotent " (Grace Works. pg 95)
- Robert Millet:
"All too often, however, my actions have betrayed my limited orientation, my vision of Christ as a type of spiritual advisor, a sort of celestial cheerleader who stands on the sidelines and whispers encouragement, not the Lord God Omnipotent who came to Earth to make men and women into new creatures through the empowering them to do what they could never do for themselves" (Grace Works. pg 110)

Feelings of failure or inadequacy are common and natural to most people

(Gerald N. Lund, Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75)

- Neal A Maxwell:
"I speak, not to the slackers in the Kingdom, but to those who carry their own load and more; not to those lulled into false security, but to those buffeted by false insecurity, who, though laboring devotedly in the Kingdom, have recurring feelings of falling forever short. . . . The first thing to be said of this feeling of inadequacy is that it is normal. . . . Following celestial road signs while in telestial traffic jams is not easy, especially when we are not just moving next door—or even across town." ("Notwithstanding My Weakness," Ensign, November 1976, 12)

Bad Hair days happen

- Elder Boyd K Packer:

"We live in a day when the adversary stresses on every hand the philosophy of instant gratification. We seem to demand instant everything, including instant solutions to our problems. We are indoctrinated that somehow we should always be instantly emotionally comfortable. When that is not so, some become quite anxious - and all too frequently seek relief from counseling, from analysis, and even from medication.

It was meant to be that life would be a challenge. To suffer some anxiety, some depression, some disappointment, even some failure is normal. Teach our members that if they have a miserable day once in a while, or several in a row, to stand steady and face them. Things will straighten out. There is great purpose in our struggle in life." (That All May Be Edified, p. 94.)

- Gordon B. Hinckley, quoting columnist Jenkins Lloyd Jones:

"Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he's been robbed. The fact is that most putts don't drop, most beef is tough, most children grow up to be just people, most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration, most jobs are more often dull than otherwise. Life is like an old time rail journey . . . delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts, interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride." ("Big Rock Candy Mountains," Deseret News, 12 June 1973, A4; as cited in Ensign, March 1997, p. 60)

Avoid unrealistic expectations

(Gerald N. Lund, Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75)

- D&C 10:4

"Do not run faster or labor more than you have strength and means provided"

- Mosiah 4:27

"see that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength"

Perfection is not an event – it is a process

- Spencer W Kimball

"Working toward perfection is not a one-time decision but a process to be pursued throughout one's lifetime " ("Hold Fast to the Iron Rod," Ensign, November 1978, 6)

- Gerald Lund (2nd Quorum of 70):
"Why should we expect to run spiritual four-minute miles until we have jogged hundreds upon hundreds of times around the spiritual tracks of our lives? Why do we expect to work spiritual calculus before we have mastered the spiritual multiplication tables? And why should we be disappointed when we cannot play spiritual symphonies if we have not yet taught ourselves to play the spiritual scales?" (Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75)
- Bruce R McConkie
"We are born again when we die as pertaining to unrighteousness and when we live as pertaining to the things of the spirit. But that doesn't happen in an instant, suddenly. That also is a process. Being born again is a gradual thing, except in a few isolated instances that are so miraculous they get written up in the scriptures. As far as the generality of the members of the Church are concerned, we are born again by degrees, and we are born again to added light and added knowledge and added desires for righteousness as we keep the commandments." ("Jesus Christ and Him Crucified," (BYU Fireside, 5 Sep 1976)

Our progress should be steady and consistent

- Galations 5:22-23
"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, *temperance* "
 - Webster: Temperance: moderation in action, thought, or feeling : restraint
- Elder Neal A Maxwell:
"The Gospel suggests to us ultimate perfection, but eternal progression rests on the assumption of gradual but regular improvement in our lives. In the city of Enoch the near perfection of this people occurred "in process of time" over many, many years. This is also the case with us." (Deposition of a Disciple, p. 71)
- Elder Neal A Maxwell:
"Given our weaknesses, however, paced progress is essential, much as God used six measured and orderly creative periods (followed by respite) in preparing man and this earth. There is a difference, therefore, between being steadily and effectively or "anxiously " engaged, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, being frantically engaged one moment and being passive and detached the next.
Lest we wrongly assume that traveling on the straight and narrow path requires hectic pace, let us remember that the Lord does not want us to weary by the way and for very good reasons. Thoughtless haste and spurts of service are not what is desired, for such naivete is like the businessman who confuses volume with profit " (Notwithstanding My Weakness, pg 3)

- Mark Chamberlain:
 "Many of us who struggle with destructive habits vacillate between thinking we're "over it completely" when things are going well and "back at square one" when we falter in any way. The truth is usually grayer than either of these: we are still in the process of change and probably will be for quite a while. Things typically go better when we learn to adopt a "steady as she goes" mentality instead of the "full steam ahead" mode we can't keep up over time."
 (More Than Will Power, How To Overcome A Destructive Habit)

Lord looks not only on actions but desires of our hearts

(Gerald N. Lund, Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75)

- Alma 41:3; D&C 88:109; 137:9

After we have done all we can, don't stress over things we can not control

- Saints while the Prophet Joseph Smith was in Liberty Jail
 - D&C 123:17
 "let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed"
- Mark Chamberlain:
 "We like the sentiments expressed in the Serenity Prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." However, most of us actually live more by what I call the Insanity Prayer: "God grant me the ability to change the unchangeable, the strength to avoid the inevitable, and the wisdom to make other people's decisions for them." " (More Than Will Power, How To Overcome A Destructive Habit)

Control Yourself Gently Instead of Harshly

(Mark Chamberlain, More than Will Power, How to Overcome A Destructive Habit)

- D&C 121:37,41-42
 "but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men...
 ...only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; By kindness, and pure knowledge..."
- Mark Chamberlain:
 "Many people respond to a relapse by berating themselves. Usually, however,

it doesn't help. If harshness incites rebellion from other people, is it any wonder it fails when we use it on ourselves?" (More Than Will Power, How To Overcome A Destructive Habit)

Replace fear with faith

- As we "act" upon our faith instead of "reacting" from our fears (2 Nephi 2:26) we will find ourselves moving forward along the straight and narrow path instead of faltering
- Isaiah 43:1-7
"Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.
When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee"
- D&C 90:24
"Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good, if ye walk uprightly and remember the covenant wherewith ye have covenanted one with another"
- Ella Wheeler Wilcox:
One ship drives east and another drives west
With the selfsame winds that blow.
'Tis the set of the sails
And not the gales
Which tells us the way to go.
Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate,
As we voyage along through life:
'Tis the set of a soul
That decides its goal,
And not the calm or the strife.
("The Winds of Fate")

Scriptures show people who stumbled but went on toward perfection

(Gerald N. Lund, Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75)

- Corianton (Alma 39:3-5, 11, Alma 49:30)
- People of Melchizedek (Alma 13:17-18)

It is who Satan whispers – "If you are not perfect you're failing"

(Gerald N. Lund, Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75)

- Gerald Lund (2nd Quorum of 70):
"we should recognize that God is pleased with every effort we make—no matter how faltering—to better ourselves. One of the most commonly listed attributes of God is that he is long-suffering and quick to show mercy. He wants us to strive for perfection, but the fact that we have not yet achieved it does not mean we are failing" (Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation, 168-75)
- Elder Marvin J Ashton:
" We need to come to terms with our desire to reach perfection and with our frustration when our accomplishments or our behaviors are less than perfect. I feel that one of the great myths we would do well to dispel is that we've come to earth to perfect ourselves, and nothing short of that will do. If I understand the teachings of the prophets of this dispensation correctly, we will not become perfect in this life, though we can make significant strides toward that goal.... I am also convinced of the fact that the speed with which we head along the straight and narrow path isn't as important as the direction in which we are traveling. That direction, if it is leading toward eternal goals, is the all-important factor." (Ensign, May 1989, pp. 20-21)

Be careful about trying to measure your spirituality by external indicators

(W. Jeffrey Marsh "Be Ye Therefore Perfect..."—Handling Obsession with Perfection)

- Elder Neal A Maxwell:
"an improving person can actually know that the course of his life is generally acceptable to the Lord despite there being much distance yet to be covered."
(Men and Women, p. 23.)
- Richard King Mower:
"Comparing ourselves to Christ's perfection is like a couple who have been married only two years comparing their marital happiness and success with that of President Kimball and his wife, who were successfully married for over fifty years. It is not only unrealistic; it also leads to frustration, impatience, and dissatisfaction between the couple. They lose the proper perspective on their relationship and the progress of their marriage. Camilla Kimball, speaking candidly about the early years of her marriage, stated, **"He wasn't the prophet when I married him."** Choosing impossible standards with which to compare ourselves invites depression. It is much more helpful and realistic to use the Lord or the Prophet as examples of the goal toward which we are traveling rather than using them as standards against which we compare ourselves or our progress" (*Overcoming Depression*, pg 88.)