

## Episode 13

### Mormon Identity

#### GIFTS AND FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

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**NARRATOR:** Welcome to Mormon Identity, a 30-minute talk radio program that addresses Church topics important to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Our host is Robert L. Millet professor of Religious Education at Brigham Young University.

**ROBERT MILLET:** Welcome once again to Mormon Identity. I'm Bob Millet and I'm joined by my friend and colleague from the department Church History and Doctrine, Professor Brent Top. Welcome Brent.

**BRENT TOP:** Thank you.

**ROBERT MILLET:** Nice to have you back again. Today we want to talk about the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. So the gifts and fruit of the Spirit. The things which come to members of the Lord's church, through their faithfulness, through the grace and goodness of God, things that separate out the Lord's people. It's interesting to me, Brent, that the even the word church, as used in the New Testament, "Ekklesia" the Greek, means the called out ones, the ones that have been called out of the world, as it were, and have been asked to walk in the marvelous light of Christ. Gifts of the Spirit, what do you understand the gifts of the Spirit to be, Brent?

**BRENT TOP:** Well I think, maybe we can back up and say, well, if you ask most people in the Church, the gifts of the Spirit, they would sometimes quote the same things that are used for fruits of the Spirit. And yet I think the scriptures are making a very important distinction between the two. So what we might say, where the scriptures say seek after the best gifts, or some have been given an extraordinary gift, I think the Apostle Paul says it well when he talks of spiritual gifts that follow the disciples of Jesus Christ through their faithfulness and through and I believe, Paul doesn't say it explicitly but by virtue of the restored gospel we know that people bring gifts with them from the pre-mortal world. Things that were developed and given them and they come to this earth. And so with Paul talking about spiritual gifts, I think it is all of that, people that have developed gifts before they came to earth, and out of the mercy and goodness of God, bring

it to bless themselves and others around them in mortality. And also gifts that people develop and talents that they have in mortality.

ROBERT MILLET: I appreciate that, Brent. I am reminded of a talk that Elder Marvin J. Ashton gave in General Conference when he said "we shouldn't confine the gifts to what's in scripture, he said that they are just innumerable..."

BRENT TOP: Right.

ROBERT MILLET: The gift of being compassionate, the gift of being a good listener, the gift of being a dear friend. All of those are gifts and graces that God grants to his people to bless those people and bless the Church.

BRENT TOP: I think that is what Paul is saying, when he says there are diversities of gifts, I think he is saying they are different and they are numerous. And so the gifts that he talks about, the gift of faith, the gift of healing, the gift of prophecy and the discerning of the spirits, the gift of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, all of those are things that we think of as the great manifestation of a follower of Jesus Christ, that signs will follow those that believe. And so we can say gifts follow those. If you are a disciple, you will have a gift. That is just the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

ROBERT MILLET: Brent, before we get into those, let me ask you this, what is the difference between seeking the gifts of God and the gifts of the Spirit? And sign seeking as we have been warned.

BRENT TOP: I think one is the result of faith and the other one is in a pursuit of faith. I think we always have manifestations of our faith, and that would be gifts that God bestows upon his faithful followers as we read in the scriptures. But a person who seeks signs so that they will believe, I think that is what is described in the scriptures.

ROBERT MILLET: And well, it is a shallow foundation to begin with. If I must have signs and wonders to prop me up, as President Joseph F. Smith once put it, he said, "there is a person who is walking in slippery paths, who's salvation is insecure because they are requiring the obvious, they are requiring the sensation in order to keep them firm in the faith." I love the language of section 63 of the Doctrine and Covenants where the Lord says, "Faith does not come from signs, but signs

follow those that believe." You know Brent, before we get into some of those marvelous gifts, I love the language of section 46 of the Doctrine and Covenants where the Lord explains why the gifts are given. Why are they given?

**BRENT TOP:** I think that we could say that it is to really bless and edify the whole Church, or we could even broaden it and say to bless and edify others who may not even be in the Church, to give them a like a light post, or a guide post to lead them to the Church. So it is always others directing, the gifts are given, the gift of healing is not so that I can heal myself when I am sick, it is so that I can bless the lives of others. And so the gifts in section 46 clearly teaches us that everyone is given a gift for the benefit of all, not just for that individual.

**ROBERT MILLET:** I am reminded, too, of verse 8 of section 46 that linked with Brent is "beware lest you are deceived, and that you may not be deceived, seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given." That the gifts of the Spirit have been given to the Church to keep the members of the Church from being deceived. Let me ask another thing, you know in Corinthians, in 1st Corinthians chapter 12, Paul gives this wonderful analogy of the body, the body of Christ, the Church, what do you make of that analogy?

**BRENT TOP:** One of the things I love that Paul is saying there, is, well, is the eye more important than the foot?, or we can say, well, is the elbow more important than the knee?, each serves a significant purpose, each working together with the others brings about the fulfillment of the whole mission. And I think Paul is saying to us, there are different parts of the body, each has its own importance, and these are the gifts, and all these gifts are to edify and strengthen, but they must work together, they compliment, they support one another. That is the purpose of gifts. No one stands alone.

**ROBERT MILLET:** And you know there is a great analogy too, and I think this is almost humorous, Paul says what if the whole body were an eye, if you can picture this giant eyeball, where would be the ears, where would be the hearing? And so this concept that the Lord says in the 84th section, "the Church hath need of every member." The beauty of a group of people coming together with their very gifts, their very divine talents, to create a home where everyone is blessed. We'll be right back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity this is Bob Millet, I'm joined by Brent Top of the Department of Church History and Doctrine at BYU. Brent, we've been talking about gifts and the fruit of the Spirit. And we've said a little bit about the gifts and how they are given for the blessing of the Church. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's wonderful discussion of how they are each like parts of the body, contributing to the whole body of Christ, the Church, and I love his discussion of the more comely parts verses those that aren't very comely, meaning not very attractive. Why don't you talk about that?

BRENT TOP: Well, in verse 24 he says, "the comely parts have no need, but God hath tempered the body together." And it's the idea that some things are more attractive or maybe more visible but that doesn't necessarily mean they are more significant.

ROBERT MILLET: ...or more contributed to the Church.

BRENT TOP: ...or more necessary; or more utilitarian. In fact, sometimes those things that are most needful are things that are not as obvious or jump out at us in some way.

ROBERT MILLET: I've used the analogy with some, sometimes these uncomely parts are pretty darn significant. Think about the kneecap or think about the elbow. I don't remember ever hearing a young man or a man say, oh my goodness this woman just passed by did you see her elbows wow, no probably you won't say that. But try getting by without an elbow, try getting by without a knee.

BRENT TOP: ...or a thumb or a big toe. We just don't think, oh man what a big toe, but it is really hard sometimes to walk. People that have to lose a big toe.

ROBERT MILLET: Like my father, due to diabetes, complications of it, lost his big toe. He had to learn to walk again.

BRENT TOP: I think that is exactly what Paul is saying is little things and things that are not as visible count for very, very big things in the whole picture of God's workings.

ROBERT MILLET: And it's interesting to the apostle Paul in 1st Corinthians he gets specifics, he says you know it seems like everybody wants to speak in tongues, or everyone wants to heal. But what about gifts like prophecy or revelation, or the gift of

wisdom, or the gifts associated with discernment; think how important those gifts are. Brent, there is a couple in section 46 that I've always appreciated: verses 12 and 13. "to some is given one, to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby. To some is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world." And then verse 14, "to others it is given to believe on their words, that they also may have eternal life if they continue faithful." What do you make of that?

**BRENT TOP:** I hear the Brethren often say things in their testimonies even as they are declaring an apostolic witness which would be that first gift that knowledge of Jesus Christ, that would be that spirit of prophecy of knowing that Jesus is the Christ, but many times they will say, I've always had a testimony, I don't know when I ever didn't have a testimony. That says to me that that was a gift, that they believed on the words of their parents, they believed on the words that they were taught. They were a believing heart. And that is an incredible gift.

**ROBERT MILLET:** I remember in the preface of his book, *The Promised Messiah*, Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "I've always known of the truthfulness of the Gospel." And then he said, "Doubt and uncertainty have been to me as the gibberish of alien tongues." Well, that is a powerful thing. I love the way it is said here that no one should feel embarrassed that they are leaning upon the testimony of another person. That if I don't know, I remember being told by Elder Harold B. Lee as a Senior Apostle, saying to a group of missionaries, he said, "I sense that there are some of you Elders and Sisters who don't know for sure, well, he said that's okay, then you lean on my faith because I do know." And I did that, I leaned on the faith of my mom and dad and I leaned the faith of those of whom I had great respect, until I gained that witness for myself. But I love that concept that believing on the testimony of others is in itself a gift of the Spirit. And that wonderful language that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.

**BRENT TOP:** Absolutely, and I think there is the same parallel with when it speaks of wisdom and knowledge. I think there are some that have incredible gifts of insight and comprehension of the scriptures that are just keen intellects and then there are others that may not have great knowledge by worldly standards, and certainly not great knowledge necessarily of the chapter and verse of the scriptures but have incredible judgment, have wisdom and I think those are incredible gifts that we rely on. I can think of a bishop in my life who was just a farmer, but just great wisdom, and always seemed to make the right decisions, didn't have great knowledge but certainly had the gift of wisdom.

**BRENT TOP:** You know Brent, I can still remember, I bet you can too, that when Brother

Robert J. Matthews was our Dean, it was not uncommon for someone to ask a question, and Brother Matthews to pause and say something like this, you know the other day I was walking in my back field and I saw a rock and I think I remember Kent Jackson, our facility member, say he's going into a parable. Well and he did that quite often. And there was a wisdom and a judgment involved that I think we admired so deeply that it had come from experience, from pain, from study and certainly from revelation. We'll be right back.

[PAUSE]

ROBERT MILLET: Welcome back to Mormon Identity. I'm Bob Millet and joined by Brent Top; both us from the Religious Education Brigham Young University. Brent, we've been talking about the gifts of the Spirit. One of my favorites, I'm going to have you read here, Brent, if you will, a portion of a statement by President George Q. Cannon who was a counselor in the Presidency of the Church through several Church Presidents; one of the great, great thinkers of our dispensation. And it deals with the gifts. And there's a pleading in his voice. Would you read that?

BRENT TOP: It says, "I feel to bear testimony to you my brethren and sisters that God is the same today as he was yesterday. And that God is willing to bestow these gifts upon his children. If any of us are imperfect it is our duty to pray for the gift that will make us perfect. Have I imperfections? I am full of them. What is my duty? To pray to God to give me the gifts that will correct these imperfections. If I am an angry man, it is my duty to pray for charity which suffereth long and is kind. Am I an envious man? It is my duty to seek for charity which envieth not. So with all the gifts of the gospel, they are intended for this purpose, no man ought to say, oh I cannot help this, it is my nature, he is not justified in it for the reason that God has promised to give strength to correct these things and to give gifts that will eradicate them if a man lack wisdom it is his duty to ask God for wisdom. The same with everything else that is the design of God concerning His Church. He wants his saints to be perfecting in truth. For this purpose he gives these gifts and bestows them upon those who seek after them in order that they may be a perfect people upon the face of the earth, notwithstanding their many weaknesses because God has promised to give the gifts that are necessary for their perfection."

ROBERT MILLET: I love that, Brent, because it's, the pleading in his voice for the Saints to seek the gifts, seek the things that would help to change the things in us that are weak, to seek the divine influences, the gifts from God that would make us a perfect people. Let me pose a situation that maybe some of our listeners could identify with. Let's suppose you have a man in a ward, Brother Johnson we'll say, who is just an outstanding Gospel Doctrine teacher in Sunday school. He opens the

scriptures and boy, it just seems like light and truth flood the room, he speaks and it's like he has a golden voice. There's just a great spirit in Gospel Doctrine in the sense that we're learning, we're growing, we're gaining understanding every Sunday. And you're just thrilled. It's clear to everyone there that Brother Johnson has what the scriptures call the gift of teaching, teaching wisdom, teaching knowledge. And yet I'm getting to know Brother Johnson a little better as we live in the ward a little longer. We do discover that Brother Johnson has a short fuse; he tends to snap at people. Even in Gospel Doctrine class, if you ask the wrong kind of question he just might just snap you down and let you know just how ignorant you are. We notice that he snaps at his children, that he snaps at his wife, he's a man that has a real temper and sometimes you notice even at the store when you see him, he doesn't seem to be a very kind person. I think for some people Brent, that is a problematic issue, how is it that I can go to church and feel such a powerful influence and he can have such a strong gift but yet I notice that, boy he sometimes is not a very good Christian?

BRENT TOP: I think that really boils down to the two words that Paul uses in the New Testament, gifts and fruits of the Spirit. As we've been talking that gifts are given to the benefit of all.

ROBERT MILLET: And to the Church.

BRENT TOP: To the Church, to strengthen, to help. Now I think what President Cannon is saying well, let's let those gifts also benefit us. To me the word fruit is the natural outgrowth of the atonement of Jesus Christ sanctifying me, and changing me and making me more Christlike. A person may be gifted without necessarily being Christlike. For example, I'm always amazed when we see people fawn over a rock star or they just think the celebrity is so incredible. Maybe they are gifted as a musician; maybe they are gifted as an actor but a jerk as a person.

ROBERT MILLET: Or I remember my father when he was in the music business traveling with people who were very popular throughout the nation and they had a golden voice but just couldn't stand people.

BRENT TOP: Right.

ROBERT MILLET: Couldn't stand being around people.

BRENT TOP: And I think Paul is then saying is yes, God does give you gifts, and they are not necessarily an indication of your righteousness, your faithfulness, sometimes they are just a gift given to you to bless other people. But the fruit comes as the atonement changes us.

ROBERT MILLET: So what you are saying, and I think agree with here you Brent,

BRENT TOP: That's a change. Yeah.

ROBERT MILLET: That I agree with you?

BRENT TOP: Yeah, I like that.

ROBERT MILLET: Doesn't happen often, but I am becoming kinder. The gifts...

BRENT TOP: ...you are getting to have some fruits of the Spirit instead of just being gifted.

ROBERT MILLET: You're right, you're right, I have compassion to the lowly, like yourself. Let's just say a person could enjoy that gift but it would be a mistake for Brother Johnson himself to suppose that he is on right standing with God because he is gifted. The real way to know how you and I are doing is the extent to which you suggested beautifully that person is beginning to become more Christlike, that person is beginning to care more and more about people. It's the people skills that made Jesus so marvelous. He just seemed to have a way, one Christian writer wrote it this way, he said, "what was it about Jesus that just drew people to him, even those who were in the outskirts of society, even those who were prostitutes, who were tax collectors, who were shepherds, that would be seen as outer edges of society, the un-respected ones, and then he asks this, and why is it that those same people feel sometimes so very uncomfortable around us today? And I think it was the power of Christ's love that drew people to him. We'll talk more about the fruit of the Spirit when we come back.

ROBERT MILLET: We welcome you back to Mormon Identity; this is Bob Millet, my colleague Brent Top from Church History and Doctrine at BYU is joining us. Brent, we are talking about the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit this segment. We began talking about the fruit concept. It's almost as if certain things come from the natural man and certain things come from the spiritual man or woman. Do you want to say



something about that?

BRENT TOP: Yeah, one I think the way of saying the difference between gifts and fruit as outlined in the scriptures would be the difference between talent and character. And so a person could have talent and no character. But Paul uses a play on words or a contrast in Galatians where he talks about worldliness and wickedness that the natural man is going to manifest itself in things like adultery and fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness

ROBERT MILLET: He calls those the works of the flesh.

BRENT TOP: That's the flesh, that's the fruit of wickedness. In contrast in verse 22...

ROBERT MILLET: What chapter are you in?

BRENT TOP: In Galatians chapter 5. Paul then says in contrast to that, he says, "but the fruit of the Spirit," or we could even put in parenthesis there or the fruit of letting the atonement cleanse us and purify us

ROBERT MILLET: That's good.

BRENT TOP: ...and making us more Christlike. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance against such there is no law, and he says they that are Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections of lust and if we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit." And I guess we could then say, then the fruit will come.

ROBERT MILLET: Yeah, I like verse 25; if we live in the spirit, let us walk in the spirit also. Walk in the spirit, I think that is Paul's way of saying if we talk the talk we really ought to walk the walk people ought to be able to tell on a Christian people, ought to be able to tell on a follower of Christ. What do you make of that list, especially beginning, verse 22, "joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness."

BRENT TOP: Those are all those things that I desperately want that I don't seem to have as

much of as I would like. But you think about the example of fruit in the scriptures how delicious it is to the taste, and Christ's fruit that he offers us through the atonement, makes us delicious and then it is manifest in how we treat other people and also how we feel we have a spiritual serenity we are not as Isaiah said of the wicked like a impetuous, tumultuous sea...

ROBERT MILLET: A troubled sea.

BRENT TOP: That is casting up its murk and mire. And so it becomes the natural byproduct of letting Christ be the lead in our lives.

ROBERT MILLET: I like that. I am reminded he uses the word love here, but as we know the highest, grandest, purest most heavenly form of love which the scriptures speak is the pure love of Christ or charity. Talk to us a bit Brent, what do you understand by charity?

BRENT TOP: Well, Paul uses the word love and he also uses the word charity. And I think in English, the word gets mistaken a little bit because in many languages there are different words to depict or describe different kinds of love. And we know that in the Greek there were about 5 different words that talked about different kinds of love. And that love that would be translated as charity that we read about in the Book of Mormon, that is pure love of Christ is something above and beyond any mortal expression.

ROBERT MILLET: Well you said most often misunderstood. You know and I know how many times we've heard people say I don't want your charity, implying that charity is a deed, charity are alms, charity is works and the fact is that there is never an instance in scripture where charity is used to represent a good deed, it is always a gift, a fruit that has been bestowed literally given by God to change the human heart.

BRENT TOP: Yeah, I was going to say that in Greek that word for charity is the love that God has for us. That is what we are seeking to have in our lives.

ROBERT MILLET: You know this beautiful concept of charity as the highest and grandest achievement of the human heart if you will, it is spoken of so beautifully in the Book of Mormon here, Ether 12, Moroni writes and again verse 33, "I remember that thou hast said that thou has loved the world even to the lying down of thy life for the world, that thou mightest take it again to prepare a place for the

children of men...." And now this insightful comment, "and now I know that this love which thou hast had for the children of men is charity, wherefore except men shall have charity they cannot inherit that place which thou has prepared in the mansions of thy father."

BRENT TOP: In fact Elder Holland says it so beautifully, that helps us to understand that it is focused on and comes from Christ, he says "the greater definition of the pure love of Christ is not what we as Christians try but largely fail to demonstrate toward others but rather what Christ totally succeeded in demonstrating toward us." I love that phrase. We don't really perform the ultimate charity.

ROBERT MILLET: We try and what we do suppose approximates to some extent what Jesus has called us to do. But as Elder Holland, I think, says in that same passage in Christ and the New Covenant "true charity has been known only once and it is found in that atoning ministry that love, that mercy, the resurrection, forgiveness all of those things."

BRENT TOP: And I think that is why in the Book of Mormon where Mormon says to us "pray with all energy of heart that we may be filled with charity." It is really saying pray with all energy of heart that His atonement will be made manifest in our lives and in how we live our lives and how we treat others.

ROBERT MILLET: And so the Lord has provided some marvelous means for us to overcome our sins, that our nature may be changed, that we can become more Christlike and in a very practical way that we can become more in tuned to the needs of others. God and Christ or in the business of people. It's their work and glory to bring to pass great things and we've been summoned to that same work as under shepherds if you will. If there was anything to be said about Jesus is that he was willing to be inconvenienced and I think that is what he has called us to do, to inconvenience ourselves and be willing to reach out, to lift, to bless others.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

NARRATOR: You've been listening to Mormon Identity thanks for tuning in; hope you join us next time.

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