

# SECTION 19

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 1835 Edition | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

## OVERVIEW

This revelation, originally cataloged as Section 19 in the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants (now Section 59 in modern editions), was delivered in August 1831 as the early Saints arrived in Independence, Missouri—identified by Smith as 'Zion.' The text serves as a foundational code of conduct for this new community. It promises temporal abundance and eternal rewards to those who obey God's commandments with an 'eye single to my glory.' Central to this text is the institution of a strict Sabbath observance, described as a day to 'offer up thy sacraments' and rest from labor to keep oneself 'unspotted from the world.' It introduces a distinct theology of stewardship, asserting that the fullness of the earth is for the faithful, provided they use resources with judgment and gratitude. Notably, the text explicitly links the receipt of 'eternal life' to the performance of 'works of righteousness,' establishing a conditional framework for salvation that contrasts sharply with the evangelical understanding of grace. It also includes specific behavioral prohibitions, such as the classification of 'much laughter' as sin.

## KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Jesus Christ), Joseph Smith, The Saints in Zion

## DOCTRINES ANALYZED

### 1. SALVATION BY WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

**Assertion:** Eternal life is a reward given to those who perform works of righteousness.

*"learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness, shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come."*

**Evangelical Comparison:** The text asserts a direct cause-and-effect relationship between human action and eternal salvation: 'he who doeth... shall receive.' In Evangelical theology, based on texts like Titus 3:5 ('Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us') and Ephesians 2:8-9, eternal life is a gift received through faith, not a reward for performance. This text shifts the basis of justification from Christ's finished work to the adherent's ongoing obedience.

### 2. RITUAL SANCTIFICATION

**Assertion:** Keeping oneself 'unspotted from the world' is achieved through Sabbath observance and offering sacraments.

*"And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day"*

**Evangelical Comparison:** The text prescribes a ritual solution (Sabbath sacraments) to a spiritual problem (being spotted by the world). In contrast, Evangelical Christianity teaches that the blood of Jesus cleanses from sin (1 John 1:7) and that true religion involves moral purity and care for the vulnerable (James 1:27), but does not view the Sabbath or sacraments as mechanisms that inherently generate righteousness or remove spiritual spots.

### 3. CONDITIONAL PROVIDENCE AND WRATH

**Assertion:** God's wrath is kindled against those who do not confess His hand in all things and obey commandments.

*"in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments."*

**Evangelical Comparison:** This doctrine places the believer in a precarious position where God's wrath is contingent on the believer's constant acknowledgment of God's hand and perfect obedience. Evangelical theology teaches that for those in Christ, there is 'no condemnation' (Romans 8:1). While ingratitude is sinful, the text implies that maintaining God's favor requires a specific cognitive performance (confessing His hand) and behavioral compliance.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

**Theological Gap:** The fundamental incompatibility lies in the mechanism of salvation and the nature of the Christian life. This text operates on a 'merit' system: God gives commandments, man obeys, and God rewards with earth and heaven. It explicitly states that 'he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive... eternal life.' Evangelical theology asserts that no one can do works of righteousness sufficient for eternal life (Isaiah 64:6) and that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer (Romans 4:5). Furthermore, the text adds legalistic burdens (prohibition of laughter, specific dietary prep rules) that resemble the Pharisaical additions to the law which Jesus condemned.

Shared Values:

Importance of the Ten Commandments (moral law); Gratitude to God; Stewardship of creation; Sabbath rest (conceptually, though applied differently)

Friction Points:

- 1. [Critical] Sola Fide (Faith Alone) – Salvation/Eternal Life is explicitly defined as a reward for 'works of righteousness.'
- 2. [Critical] Sola Gratia (Grace Alone) – Blessings and eternal life are conditional upon strict obedience and gratitude, minimizing unmerited favor.
- 3. [Major] Sola Scriptura – Adds new commandments (no laughter) and rituals not found in the Bible, claiming divine authority.

Semantic Warnings:

<p><b>"Zion"</b></p> <p><b>In Text:</b> A literal geographic location in Missouri, USA.</p> <p><b>Evangelical:</b> Historically Jerusalem; Theologically the spiritual people of God or the heavenly city (Hebrews 12:22).</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>In this text, 'standing upon the land of Zion' is a physical act of relocation.</i></p>
<p><b>"Sacraments"</b></p> <p><b>In Text:</b> Ordinances and rituals performed by the Saints, specifically on the Sabbath.</p> <p><b>Evangelical:</b> Generally refers to Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Protestant) or the seven sacraments (Catholic), but never as a means to 'earn' forgiveness weekly.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>The text commands to 'offer up thy sacraments' as a work of the believer.</i></p>
<p><b>"Eternal Life"</b></p> <p><b>In Text:</b> A reward for works of righteousness (often implying Exaltation/Godhood in broader Mormon theology).</p> <p><b>Evangelical:</b> The gift of God through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23), knowing the only true God (John 17:3).</p> <p><b>Example:</b> <i>Verse 5 frames eternal life as the 'reward' for doing works.</i></p>

SOTERIOLOGY

**Salvation Defined:** Inheriting the earth, peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

**How Attained:** By coming to Zion, obeying commandments, offering sacraments, and doing works of righteousness.

**Basis of Assurance:** Based on the believer's performance: 'inasmuch as ye do these things...'

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** Directly opposes Sola Fide. The text says 'he who doeth the works... shall receive... eternal life,' whereas Romans 4:4-5 says 'to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.'

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

- 1. Love the Lord with all heart, might, mind, and strength
- 2. Serve Him in the name of Jesus Christ

3. Love thy neighbor as thyself
4. Do not steal, commit adultery, or kill
5. Thank the Lord in all things
6. Offer a sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit
7. Go to the house of prayer on the Lord's day
8. Offer up sacraments
9. Rest from labors
10. Confess sins to brethren and before the Lord
11. Prepare food with singleness of heart

**Implicit Obligations:**

1. Migrate to the land of Zion (implied by 'blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion')
2. Maintain a constant state of gratitude to avoid offending God
3. Accept 'commandments not a few' as a blessing

**Ritual Requirements:**

1. Sabbath day attendance at the house of prayer
2. Offering oblations and sacraments
3. Fasting (defined as rejoicing and prayer)

**EVANGELISM TOOLKIT**

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**Discovery Questions:**

1. This passage says that 'he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive... eternal life.' How do you reconcile that with Titus 3:5 which says he saved us 'not by works of righteousness which we have done'?
2. The text mentions that 'much laughter' is a sin. How does that sit with you personally, and how do you interpret the role of joy in the Christian life?
3. Verse 5 says God's wrath is kindled against those who don't confess His hand in *\*all\** things. Do you feel a pressure to constantly interpret every event, even tragic ones, as a blessing to avoid God's anger?

**Redemptive Analogies:**

1. The desire to be unspotted from the world. – The text recognizes the need for purity but prescribes a ritual solution (Sabbath). The Gospel offers a permanent solution through Christ's sacrifice. [James 1:27 (True religion), Hebrews 9:14 (Blood of Christ cleansing the conscience).]
2. Broken Heart and Contrite Spirit. – This is the exact posture God desires, not for the sake of more rules, but for receiving grace. It bridges to the Gospel call for repentance. [Psalm 51:17, Isaiah 57:15.]

**Spiritual Weight:**

1. Performance Anxiety / Works-Righteousness [Severe] – The believer is burdened with the knowledge that their eternal life depends on their 'works of righteousness.' There is no rest in a finished work of Christ, only the pressure to perform to earn the reward.
2. Legalism / Behavioral Control [Moderate] – By labeling laughter as sin and prescribing specific emotional states (cheerful countenances), the text invades the adherent's emotional life, creating guilt over natural human expressions.
3. Fear of Divine Wrath [Severe] – The explicit statement that God's wrath is kindled against those who do not confess His hand in *\*all\** things creates a psychological pressure to suppress grief or confusion and feign gratitude to appease God.

**EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Prophetic Revelation.

**Verification Method:** Experiential confirmation through obedience ('inasmuch as ye do this... the fulness of the earth is yours').

**Evangelical Contrast:** Evangelical epistemology relies on the objective standard of the written Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16) rather than subjective modern revelations or the promise of temporal rewards as proof of truth.

## TEXTUAL CRITICISM

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**Dating:** August 7, 1831 (Published in 1835 D&C).

**Authorship:** Joseph Smith (Voice of the Lord).

**Textual Issues:** This text has undergone minor revisions in punctuation and versification in later editions (becoming D&C 59) but the core theological assertions remain.