

SECTION 92

FAITH: Mormonism | TEXT: Doctrine and Covenants | VOLUME: 2013 | AUTHOR: Joseph Smith

OVERVIEW

Doctrine and Covenants Section 92 is a short administrative revelation received by Joseph Smith on March 15, 1833, in Kirtland, Ohio. It addresses the 'United Order' (historically the United Firm), a governing business and stewardship committee within the early Church. The text directs the members of this order to formally receive Frederick G. Williams, who had recently been appointed as a counselor to Joseph Smith. The revelation places a specific mandate on Williams to be a 'lively member'—implying active, energetic contribution—and explicitly ties his status of being 'blessed forever' to his faithfulness in keeping 'all former commandments.' This text serves as a canonized administrative action that reinforces the hierarchical structure of the early LDS movement and establishes a theological link between administrative service, obedience to commandments, and eternal reward.

KEY FIGURES

The Lord (Speaker), Joseph Smith (Prophet/Revelator), Frederick G. Williams (Recipient/Counselor), The United Order (United Firm members)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. CONDITIONAL ETERNAL BLESSING

Assertion: Eternal blessings are contingent upon the faithful keeping of all commandments.

"inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments you shall be blessed forever. (D&C 92:2)"

Evangelical Comparison: The text employs the conditional clause 'inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments' as the prerequisite for being 'blessed forever.' In Evangelical theology, the status of being blessed eternally (justification and glorification) is secured by the finished work of Christ and received through faith alone (Sola Fide), not maintained by the believer's adherence to a code of law. While Evangelicals believe obedience is a fruit of salvation, this text frames obedience as the condition for the eternal blessing itself, creating a works-based framework for security.

2. THE UNITED ORDER (CONSECRATION)

Assertion: God commands the organization of a temporal and spiritual order for the management of church resources.

"I give unto the united order... a revelation and commandment... that ye shall receive him into the order. (D&C 92:1)"

Evangelical Comparison: The 'United Order' (or United Firm) was a specific institution blending business management with spiritual stewardship. In Mormon theology, participation in the Law of Consecration (of which this is a part) is often viewed as essential for the highest degree of salvation (Celestial Kingdom). Evangelicalism lacks a direct equivalent, viewing church governance and economics as matters of wisdom and stewardship rather than saving ordinances or revealed metaphysical orders.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental gap lies in the basis of assurance. D&C 92:2 explicitly links the promise 'you shall be blessed forever' to the condition 'inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments.' This creates a covenant of works. In contrast, the Evangelical position (Sola Fide) asserts that the believer is blessed forever solely on the merit of Christ, received by faith. While good works follow true faith, they are never the condition for the promise of eternal life (Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5). Furthermore, the text elevates administrative church business to the level of 'Thus saith the Lord' revelation.

Shared Values:

Importance of community; Stewardship of resources; Faithfulness to God's commands

Friction Points:

1. [Critical] Sola Fide – Salvation/Blessing is made conditional on keeping 'all former commandments.'
2. [Major] Sola Gratia – Grace is obscured by the requirement to be a 'lively member' to receive the blessing.
3. [Major] Sola Scriptura – New revelation is added to the canon regarding administrative business.

Semantic Warnings:

"United Order"

In Text: A specific consecration-based economic and spiritual organization within the early LDS Church.

Evangelical: N/A (No direct biblical equivalent; distinct from the voluntary sharing in Acts 4).

Example: *In D&C 92, the United Order is a formal institution one is voted into; in Acts, sharing was voluntary and organic.*

"Blessed forever"

In Text: Likely refers to exaltation or eternal life, contingent on faithfulness.

Evangelical: Eternal life is a gift of God through Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23), not a wage earned by keeping commandments.

Example: *The text says 'inasmuch as you are faithful... you shall be blessed forever,' making it conditional.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Implied as 'blessed forever' (eternal life/exaltation).

How Attained: Through faithfulness in keeping commandments and active participation ('lively member').

Basis of Assurance: Personal performance and obedience.

Comparison to Sola Fide: Directly contradicts Sola Fide by introducing an 'inasmuch' clause—conditional performance—as the gateway to eternal blessing (Galatians 3:10-11).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Receive Frederick G. Williams into the United Order
2. Be a 'lively member' in the order
3. Keep all former commandments

Implicit Obligations:

1. Accept Joseph Smith's administrative decisions as divine revelation
2. Maintain active, energetic participation in church assignments

Ritual Requirements:

1. Formal admission into the United Firm (often accompanied by covenants)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. In verse 2, the promise of being 'blessed forever' depends on keeping 'all former commandments.' How do you handle the pressure of needing to keep **all** commandments to ensure that blessing?
2. What does it mean to you to be a 'lively member'? Do you feel that your activity level in the church determines your standing with God?
3. If being blessed forever is based on 'inasmuch as you are faithful,' how can anyone be sure they have been faithful enough?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Lively Member – We all want to be useful and active ('lively') in God's kingdom. In the Gospel, this 'liveliness' is the **result** of the Spirit giving us life, not a requirement to earn our place. [Ephesians 2:10 (Created in Christ Jesus for good works)]

2. Admission to the Order – The text shows a desire for belonging and acceptance. In Christ, we are adopted into God's family by grace, not voted in by a committee based on utility. [Romans 8:15 (Spirit of adoption)]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Performance Pressure [Moderate] – The command to be a 'lively member' creates a culture where spiritual worth is measured by visible activity and busyness within the organization.
2. Perfectionism/Uncertainty [Severe] – The condition 'inasmuch as you are faithful in keeping all former commandments' places the infinite weight of eternity on the finite shoulders of the believer's consistency.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Prophetic Revelation

Verification Method: Obedience to the prophet and internal spiritual confirmation

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelicals test all claims against the closed canon of Scripture (Acts 17:11), whereas this text relies on the ongoing authority of a modern prophet.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: March 15, 1833

Authorship: Joseph Smith

Textual Issues: The term 'United Order' was substituted for 'United Firm' in the 1876 edition to protect the identity of the business operations, though the 2013 edition retains 'United Order' with explanatory headers.