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Of the Seventy

The Miracle of the Atonement

There is no sin or transgression, pain or sorrow, which is outside of the healing power of His Atonement.

While preparing my talk for this conference, I received a shocking phone call from my father. He said that my younger brother had died that morning in his sleep. I was heartbroken. He was only 51 years old. As I thought about him, I felt impressed to share with you some events from his life. I do so with permission.

As a youth my brother was handsome, friendly, and outgoing—totally dedicated to the gospel. After serving an honorable mission, he married his sweetheart in the temple. They were blessed with a son and a daughter. His future was full of promise.

But then he gave in to a weakness. He chose to live a hedonistic lifestyle, which cost him his health, his marriage, and his membership in the Church.

He moved far from home. He continued his self-destructive behavior for more than a decade, but the Savior had not forgotten or abandoned him. Eventually the pain of his despair allowed a spirit of humility to enter his soul. His feelings of anger, rebellion, and militancy began to dissipate. Like the prodigal son, “he came to

himself.”¹ He began to reach out to the Savior and to make his way back home and to faithful parents who never gave up on him.

He walked the path of repentance. It wasn’t easy. After being out of the Church for 12 years, he was rebaptized and received again the gift of the Holy Ghost. His priesthood and temple blessings were eventually restored.

He was blessed to find a woman who was willing to overlook the ongoing health challenges from his prior lifestyle, and they were sealed in the temple. Together they had two children. He served faithfully in the bishopric for several years.

My brother died on Monday morning, March 7. The previous Friday evening he and his wife attended the temple. On Sunday morning, the day before he died, he taught the priesthood lesson in his high priests group. He went to bed that evening, never to awaken again in this life—but to come forth in the resurrection of the just.

I am grateful for the miracle of the Atonement in the life of my brother. The Savior’s Atonement is available to each of us—always.

We access the Atonement through repentance. When we repent, the Lord allows us to put the mistakes of the past behind us.

“Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more.

“By this ye may know if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them.”²

Each of us knows a person who has had serious challenges in his or her life—someone who has wandered or wavered. That person could be a friend or relative, a parent or child, a husband or wife. That person may even be you.

I speak unto all, even unto you. I speak of the miracle of the Atonement.

The Messiah came to redeem men from the Fall of Adam.³ Everything in the gospel of Jesus Christ points toward the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah, the Son of God.⁴

The plan of salvation could not be brought about without an atonement. “Therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.”⁵

The atoning sacrifice had to be carried out by the sinless Son of God, for fallen man could not atone for his own sins.⁶ The Atonement had to be infinite and eternal—to cover all men throughout all eternity.⁷

Through His suffering and death, the Savior atoned for the sins of all men.⁸ His Atonement began in Gethsemane and continued on the cross and culminated with the Resurrection.

“Yea, . . . he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son

being swallowed up in the will of the Father.”⁹ Through His atoning sacrifice, He made “his soul an offering for sin.”¹⁰

As the Only Begotten Son of God, He inherited power over physical death. That allowed Him to sustain His life as He suffered “even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great [was] his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.”¹¹

Not only did He pay the price for the sins of all men, but He also took “upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.” And He took “upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.”¹²

The Savior felt the weight of the anguish of all mankind—the anguish of sin and of sorrow. “Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.”¹³

Through His Atonement, He heals not only the transgressor, but He also heals the innocent who suffer because of those transgressions. As the innocent exercise faith in the Savior and in His Atonement and forgive the transgressor, they too can be healed.

There are times when each of us needs “relief from feelings of guilt that come from mistakes and sins.”¹⁴ As we repent, the Savior removes the guilt from our souls.

Through His atoning sacrifice, our sins are remitted. With the exception of sons of perdition, the Atonement is available to everyone all the time, no matter how large or small the sin, “on conditions of repentance.”¹⁵

Because of His infinite love, Jesus Christ invites us to repent so that we will not have to suffer the full weight of our own sins:



“Repent—repent, lest . . . your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.”¹⁶

The Savior offers healing to those who are suffering from sin. “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?”¹⁷

Jesus Christ is the Great Healer of our souls. With the exception of sins of perdition, there is no sin or transgression, pain or sorrow, which is outside of the healing power of His Atonement.

When we sin, Satan tells us we are lost. In contrast, our Redeemer offers redemption to all—no matter what we have done wrong—even to you and to me.

As you consider your own life, are there things that you need to change? Have you made mistakes that still need to be corrected?

If you are suffering from feelings of guilt or remorse, bitterness or anger, or loss of faith, I invite you to seek relief. Repent and forsake your sins. Then, in prayer, ask God for forgiveness. Seek forgiveness from those you have wronged. Forgive those who have wronged you. Forgive yourself.

Go to the bishop if necessary. He is the Lord’s messenger of mercy. He will help you as you struggle to become clean through repentance.

Immerse yourself in prayer and scripture study. As you do so, you will feel the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. The Savior said, “Sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and



cleanse your hands . . . before me, that I may make you clean.”¹⁸

As we are made clean through the power of His Atonement, the Savior becomes our advocate with the Father, pleading:

“Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.”¹⁹

Each of us has been given the gift of moral agency. “Men are free . . . to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the . . . power of the devil.”²⁰

Years ago my brother exercised his agency when he chose a lifestyle that cost him his health, his family, and his membership in the Church. Years later he exercised that same agency when

he chose to repent, to conform his life to the teachings of the Savior, and to literally be born again through the power of the Atonement.

I testify of the miracle of the Atonement. I have seen its healing power in the life of my brother and felt it in my own life. The healing and redemptive power of the Atonement



is available to each of us—always.

I testify that Jesus is the Christ—the Healer of our souls. I pray that each of us will choose to respond to the Savior’s invitation: “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?”²¹ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Luke 15:17.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42–43.
3. See 2 Nephi 2:25–26.
4. See Alma 34:14.
5. Alma 42:15.
6. See Alma 34:11.
7. See Alma 34:10.
8. See Alma 22:14.
9. Mosiah 15:7.
10. Mosiah 14:10.
11. Mosiah 3:7.
12. Alma 7:11–12.
13. Mosiah 14:4.
14. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 2.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 18:12.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–18.
17. 3 Nephi 9:13.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 88:74.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 45:4–5.
20. 2 Nephi 2:27.
21. 3 Nephi 9:13.