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Of the Seventy

“He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve” (Luke 6:12–13).

Do you prepare yourself to make important decisions by praying to your Heavenly Father? Do you prepare yourself for a moment of prayer?

When Jesus came to the American continent, He taught the people to pray. “And Jesus said unto them: Pray on; nevertheless they did not cease to pray” (3 Nephi 19:26).

Jesus invites us to “pray always” (D&C 10:5). Jesus knows that our Heavenly Father hears and gives what is best for us. Why is it that sometimes we don’t want to receive? Why?

At the very moment we say, “Father in Heaven,” He hears our prayers and is sensitive to us and our needs. And so His eyes and His ears are now connected to you. He reads our minds, and He feels our hearts. You cannot hide anything from Him. Now, the wonderful thing is that He will see you with eyes of love and mercy—love and mercy that we cannot fully understand. But love and mercy are with Him the very moment you say, “Father in Heaven.”

So a moment of prayer is a very, very sacred moment. He is not one to say, “No, I will not listen to you now because you only come to me when you are in trouble.” Only men do that. He is not one to say, “Oh, you cannot imagine how busy I am now.” Only men say that.

That we all may pray as Jesus has taught us to pray is my hope and my prayer in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. ■

# Am I Good Enough? Will I Make It?

*If you will really try and will not rationalize or rebel—repenting often and pleading for grace—you positively are going to be “good enough.”*

Dear sisters and brothers, what a blessing it is for us to gather to be taught by the Lord’s servants. Isn’t it wonderful how many ways our loving Heavenly Father guides and blesses us? He really wants us to come home.

Through a series of tender mercies as a young doctor coming out of medical school, I was accepted for pediatric

residency training in a high-powered, competitive program. When I met the other interns, I felt like the least intelligent and least prepared of all. I thought there was no way I could measure up to the rest of the group.

Early in our third month, I was sitting in the nurse’s station in the hospital late one night, alternately sobbing to myself and falling asleep as I tried to write the admission orders for a small boy with pneumonia. I had never felt so discouraged in my life. I didn’t have any idea how to treat pneumonia in a 10-year-old. I began to wonder what I was doing there.

Just at that moment, one of the senior residents put his hand on my shoulder. He asked me how I was doing, and I poured out my frustrations and fears. His response changed my life. He told me how proud he and all of the other senior residents were of me and how they felt like I was going to be an excellent doctor. In short, he believed in me at a time when I didn’t even believe in myself.

As with my own experience, our members often ask, “Am I good enough as a person?” or “Will I really





make it to the celestial kingdom?" Of course, there is no such thing as "being good enough." None of us could ever "earn" or "deserve" our salvation, but it is normal to wonder if we are acceptable before the Lord, which is how I understand these questions.

Sometimes when we attend church, we become discouraged even by sincere invitations to improve ourselves. We think silently, "I can't do all these things" or "I will never be as good as all these people." Perhaps we feel much the same as I did in the hospital that night.

Please, my beloved brothers and sisters, we must stop comparing ourselves to others. We torture ourselves needlessly by competing and comparing. We falsely judge our self-worth by the *things* we do or don't have and by the *opinions of others*. If we must compare, let us compare how we were in the past to how we are today—and even to how we want to be in the future. The only opinion of us that matters is what our Heavenly Father thinks of us. Please sincerely ask Him what He thinks of you. He will love and correct but never discourage us; that is Satan's trick.

Let me be direct and clear. The answers to the questions "Am I good

enough?" and "Will I make it?" are "Yes! You are going to be good enough" and "Yes, you are going to make it as long as you keep repenting and do not rationalize or rebel." The God of heaven is not a heartless referee looking for any excuse to throw us out of the game. He is our perfectly loving Father, who yearns more than anything else to have all of His children come back home and live with Him as families forever. He truly gave His Only Begotten Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life!<sup>1</sup> Please believe, and please take hope and comfort from, this eternal truth. Our Heavenly Father intends for us to make it! That is His work and His glory.<sup>2</sup>

I love the way President Gordon B. Hinckley used to teach this principle. I heard him say on several occasions, "Brothers and sisters, all the Lord expects of us is to try, but you have to *really try!*"<sup>3</sup>

"Really trying" means doing the best we can, recognizing where we need to improve, and then trying again. By repeatedly doing this, we come closer and closer to the Lord, we feel His Spirit more and more,<sup>4</sup> and we receive more of His grace, or help.<sup>5</sup>

I sometimes think we don't recognize how very much the Lord wants to help us. I love the words of Elder David A. Bednar, who said:

"Most of us clearly understand that the Atonement is for sinners. I am not so sure, however, that we know and understand that the Atonement is also for saints. . . .

". . . The Atonement provides help for us to overcome and avoid bad and to do and become good. . . .

" . . . *It is . . . through the grace of the Lord that individuals . . . receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to [do]. . . . This grace is an enabling power . . .* [Bible Dictionary, "Grace"; emphasis added] . . . or heavenly help each of us desperately needs to qualify for the celestial kingdom."<sup>6</sup>

All we have to do to receive this heavenly help is to ask for it and then to act on the righteous promptings we receive.

The great news is that if we have sincerely repented, our former sins will not keep us from being exalted. Moroni tells us of the transgressors in his day: "But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with real intent, they were forgiven."<sup>7</sup>



And the Lord Himself said of the sinner:

“If he confess his sins before thee and me, and repenteth in the sincerity of his heart, him shall ye forgive, and I will forgive him also.

“Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me.”<sup>8</sup>

If we will sincerely repent, God really will forgive us, even when we have committed the same sin over and over again. As Elder Jeffrey R. Holland said: “However many chances you think you have missed, however many mistakes you feel you have made . . . , I testify that you have *not* traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ’s Atonement shines.”<sup>9</sup>

This does not mean in any way that sin is OK. Sin always has consequences. Sin always harms and hurts both the sinner and those affected by his or her sins. And true repentance is never easy.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, please understand that even though God takes away the guilt and stain of our sins when we sincerely repent, He may not immediately take away all of the consequences of our sins. Sometimes they remain with us for the rest of our lives. And the worst kind of sin is premeditated sin, where one says, “I can sin now

and repent later.” I believe that this is a solemn mockery of the sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Himself declared, “For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.”<sup>11</sup>

And Alma proclaimed, “Behold, I say unto you, wickedness never was happiness.”<sup>12</sup>

One of the reasons that Alma’s statement is particularly true is that with repeated sinning, we distance ourselves from the Spirit, become discouraged, and then stop repenting. But I repeat, because of the Savior’s Atonement, we can repent and be fully forgiven, as soon as our repentance is sincere.

What we cannot do is rationalize rather than repent. It will not work to justify ourselves in our sins by saying, “God knows it’s just too hard for me, so He accepts me like I am.” “Really trying” means we keep at it as we fully come up to the Lord’s standard, which is clearly defined in the questions we are asked in order to get a temple recommend.

The other thing that will surely keep us out of heaven and separate us from the help we need now is rebellion. From the book of Moses, we learn that Satan was cast out of heaven for rebellion.<sup>13</sup> We are in rebellion any time we say in our hearts, “I don’t need God, and I don’t have to repent.”

As an intensive care pediatrician, I know that if one inappropriately rejects lifesaving treatment, it can lead needlessly to physical death. Similarly, when we rebel against God, we reject our only help and hope, who is Jesus Christ, which leads to spiritual death. None of us can do this on our own power. None of us will ever be “good enough,” save through the merits and mercy of Jesus Christ,<sup>14</sup> but because God respects our agency, we also

cannot be saved without our trying. That is how the balance between grace and works works. We can have hope in Christ because He wants to help and change us. In fact, He is already helping you. Just pause and reflect and recognize His help in your life.

I witness to you that if you will really try and will not rationalize or rebel—repenting often and pleading for the grace, or help, of Christ—you positively are going to be “good enough,” that is, acceptable before the Lord; you are going to make it to the celestial kingdom, being perfect in Christ; and you are going to receive the blessings and glory and joy that God desires for each of His precious children—including specifically you and me. I testify that God lives and wants us to come home. I testify that Jesus lives. In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. See John 3:16.
2. See Moses 1:39.
3. This exact phrasing from President Hinckley does not appear in print, but the following is recorded: “Just do the best you can, but be sure it is your very best” (“A Challenging Time—a Wonderful Time,” *Teaching Seminary: Preservice Readings* [Church Educational System manual, 2004], 18). He also said: “Please don’t nag yourself with thoughts of failure. Do not set goals far beyond your capacity to achieve. Simply do what you can do, in the best way you know, and the Lord will accept of your effort” (“Rise to the Stature of the Divine within You,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 96).
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
5. See Ether 12:27.
6. David A. Bednar, “The Atonement and the Journey of Mortality,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2012, 42; *Liahona*, Apr. 2012, 14.
7. Moroni 6:8.
8. Mosiah 26:29–30.
9. Jeffrey R. Holland, “The Laborers in the Vineyard,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 33.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:15–19.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.
12. Alma 41:10.
13. See Moses 4:3.
14. See 2 Nephi 2:6–8.