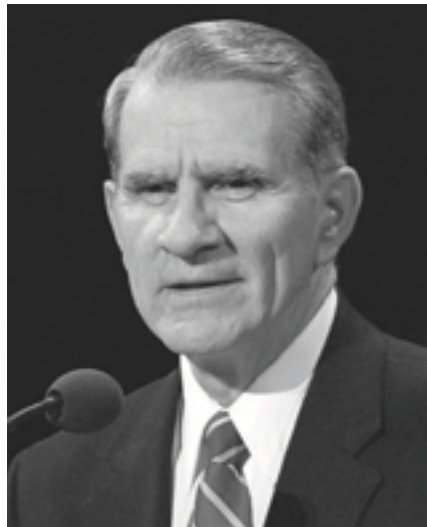

Arms of Safety

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By coming humbly and fully repentant to sacrament meeting and worthily partaking of the sacrament, we may feel those arms [of safety] again and again.



I speak this evening about the Atonement of Jesus Christ and its relevance to the administration of the sacrament by the holders of the Aaronic Priesthood, taught so powerfully and so beautifully by Elder Oaks this morning. I will use a short scripture phrase that helps me visualize the Savior's mercy. It is the phrase "arms of safety" (see Alma 34:16).

Secure in His Arms

A family had been taking pictures on a lookout point of the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. They heard screams and ran to find that a two-year-old girl had fallen through a railing to a ledge about 35 feet (11 m) below. The little one tried to climb back up, but her movements caused her to slip even farther until she was

5 feet (1.5 m) from a dangerous 200-foot (61-m) drop.

A 19-year-old young man named Ian saw where she was and, using his emergency-response training, knew how to handle the situation. These are his words: "Immediately, it all came at me, and I just knew what I had to do. I set down my camera and went up the trail a little ways where it wasn't as steep, climbed over the rail, scrambled down a bunch of rocks and through brush, and found her." Holding her in his arms for an hour, Ian waited until emergency teams could drop down with ropes" to rescue them ("Save Her!" *New Era*, Sept. 2007, 6). The phrase "holding her in his arms" caught my attention because the scriptures talk about arms—arms of love, arms of mercy, and arms of safety (see 2 Nephi 1:15; Mosiah 16:12; Alma 5:33; D&C 6:20; 29:1).

The scripture phrase "encircled in the arms of safety" comes from Amulek's message to the Zoramites about the infinite and eternal Atonement. He taught that the sacrifice of the Son of God made it possible for man to have faith in Christ to lead us to repent. "And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety" (Alma 34:16; see also vv. 9–15).

Teach Intangibles with Tangibles

To better understand "arms of safety" it is important to remember

that the Savior used tangible things, such as coins, seeds, sheep, loaves, fishes, and body parts to teach gospel principles.

Arms are tangible, and we use them to express affection and love. When I come home from the office, I am encircled in the tangible arms of my wife. I have experienced arms of love and safety throughout my service in Latin America by means of the common greeting, *un abrazo*, or hug.

As I have pondered how to effectively teach the Atonement to others, the phrase “arms of safety” has been useful. When we were baptized and received the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, we received two ordinances that introduce us to the arms of safety. By coming humbly and fully repentant to sacrament meeting and worthily partaking of the sacrament, we may feel those arms again and again.

Likening a Sacrament Meeting to Our Day

The section heading to Doctrine and Covenants 110 gives the context for one of our most relevant verses about enjoying arms of safety. On a Sabbath day during the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained that he and other priesthood holders had administered the sacrament to the Church.

Following this sacred ordinance, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery retired to pray in private. Following the prayer, the Savior appeared to these two men and said, “Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5).

The sequence of events in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 parallels our day and is likened to us. Sabbath after Sabbath, you young priesthood holders administer the sacrament to the Saints, who come to sacrament meeting prayerfully, hungering for spiritual healing, hoping, pleading to hear in

their minds and hearts these words: “Behold, your sins are forgiven you; you are clean before me; therefore, lift up your heads and rejoice” (D&C 110:5).

Elder Dallin H. Oaks has testified that there is a spiritual cleansing or healing associated with the sacrament: “The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. We are commanded to repent of our sins and come to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament. In the partaking of the bread, we witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments. When we comply with this covenant, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our

baptism. We are made clean and can always have His Spirit to be with us” (“Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Liabona*, Apr. 2001, 14; *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 13).

Implications for Aaronic Priesthood Holders

To help members more fully receive that cleansing, or the arms of safety, those who hold keys to authorize and those who administer the sacrament should ensure that general guidelines in Church handbooks concerning the preparation, blessing, and passing of the sacrament are followed. Each priesthood holder should remember that he is acting on behalf of the Lord and be reverent and dignified. Generally speaking, our youth are exemplary.



However, in the administration of the sacrament, occasionally we see a disturbing drift towards too much informality and casualness in dress and appearance.

Young men, before going to church, will you please pause before a mirror one more time and ask yourself if every aspect of your appearance is in order? Better still, invite someone you love, such as a parent, to look at you one more time, and if something is amiss, don't resent their counsel.

True servants of Jesus Christ are properly groomed and dressed, reflecting always His standards and not the worldly drift of casualness. Having every detail carefully attended to ensures that the Spirit of the Lord will be present. The dress or appearance of those administering the sacrament should not be a distraction for those who are earnestly seeking the blessings of the infinite Atonement.

A theme found in the messages of President Monson to us, the priesthood holders, is that it is a privilege to hold the priesthood: "It is a commission to serve, a privilege to lift, and an opportunity to bless the lives of others" ("Our Sacred Priesthood Trust," *Liabona* and *Ensign*, May 2006, 57). I testify that this applies to the administration of the sacrament.

Experiencing the Arms of Safety

While serving as a bishop, I witnessed the blessings of the Atonement in the lives of Church members who committed serious transgressions. As a judge in Israel I listened to their confessions and, when needed, placed restrictions upon them, such as not partaking of the sacrament for a time.

A young single adult in our ward was dating a young woman. They allowed their affections to get out of control. He came to me for counsel and help. Based on what was



Parents in Argentina keep their children close between conference sessions.

confessed and the impressions of the Spirit to me, among other things, he was not permitted to partake of the sacrament for a time. We met regularly to ensure that repentance had happened, and, after an appropriate time, I authorized him to again partake of the sacrament.

As I sat on the stand in that sacrament meeting, my eyes were drawn to him as he now partook of the sacrament worthily. I witnessed arms of mercy, love, and safety encircling him as the healing of the Atonement warmed his soul and lifted his load, resulting in the promised forgiveness, peace, and happiness.

The Atonement—an Ever-Present Power

I have experienced and have a witness of a truth that President Packer taught: "For some reason, we think the Atonement of Christ applies *only* at the end of mortal life to

redemption from the Fall, from spiritual death. It is much more than that. It is an ever-present power to call upon in everyday life. When we are racked or harrowed up or tormented by guilt or burdened with grief, He can heal us. While we do not fully understand how the Atonement of Christ was made, we can experience 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding'" ("The Touch of the Master's Hand," *Liabona*, July 2001, 26; *Ensign*, May 2001, 23).

I love my Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. I place my faith, my love, my loyalty, and my devotion in Them. I testify that God is our Heavenly Father and that we are His children. I bear witness that the Atonement is real and has power in our lives. I testify that the restored gospel is true. These truths are found in the holy scriptures, especially in the Book of Mormon. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■