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Of the Seventy

# Remembering in Whom We Have Trusted

*Our hope to live again with the Father depends on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.*

When I was nine years old, my white-haired, four-foot-eleven-inch (1.5 m) maternal grandmother came to spend a few weeks with us at our home. One afternoon while she was there, my two older brothers and I decided to dig a hole in a field across the street from our house. I don't know why we did it; sometimes boys dig holes. We got a little dirty but nothing that would get us into too much trouble. Other boys in the neighborhood saw just how exciting it was to dig a hole and started to help. Then we all got dirtier together. The ground was hard, so we dragged a garden hose over and put a little water in the bottom of the hole to soften up the ground. We got some mud on us as we dug, but the hole did get deeper.

Someone in our group decided we should turn our hole into a swimming pool, so we filled it up with water. Being the youngest and wanting to fit in, I was persuaded to jump in and try it out. Now I was really dirty. I didn't start out planning to be covered in mud, but that's where I ended up.

When it started to get cold, I crossed the street, intending to walk into my

house. My grandmother met me at the front door and refused to let me in. She told me that if she let me in, I would track mud into the house that she had just cleaned. So I did what any nine-year-old would do under the circumstances and ran to the back door, but she was quicker than I thought. I got mad, stomped my feet, and demanded

to come into the house, but the door remained closed.

I was wet, muddy, cold, and, in my childhood imagination, thought I might die in my own backyard. Finally, I asked her what I had to do to come into the house. Before I knew it, I found myself standing in the backyard while my grandmother sprayed me off with a hose. After what seemed like an eternity, my grandmother pronounced me clean and let me come into the house. It was warm in the house, and I was able to put on dry, clean clothes.

With that real-life parable of sorts in mind, please consider the following words of Jesus Christ: "And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end."<sup>1</sup>

Standing outside of my house being sprayed off by my grandmother was





unpleasant and uncomfortable. Being denied the opportunity to return and be with our Father in Heaven because we chose to remain in or dirtied by a mud hole of sin would be eternally tragic. We should not deceive ourselves about what it takes to return and remain in the presence of our Father in Heaven. We have to be clean.

Before we came to this earth, we participated as spirit sons and daughters of God in a grand council.<sup>2</sup> Each of us was paying attention, and none of us fell asleep. In that council our Father in Heaven presented a plan. Because the plan preserved our agency and required that we learn from our own experience and not just from His, He knew we would commit sin. He also knew that sin would cause

us to become unclean and unable to return to His presence, because where He lives is even cleaner than a house cleaned by my grandmother.

Because our Father in Heaven loves us and has as His purpose “to bring to pass [our] immortality and eternal life,”<sup>3</sup> His plan included the role of a Savior—someone who could help us become clean no matter how dirty we have become. When our Father in Heaven announced the need for a Savior, I believe all of us turned and looked at Jesus Christ, the Firstborn in the Spirit, the one who had progressed to the point of becoming like the Father.<sup>4</sup> I believe all of us knew it had to be Him, that none of the rest of us could do it, but that He could and that He would.

In the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Golgotha, Jesus Christ suffered both body and spirit, trembled because of pain, bled at every pore, pled with His Father to take away the bitter cup from Him,<sup>5</sup> and yet He still partook.<sup>6</sup> Why did He do it? In His words, He wanted to glorify His Father and finish His “preparations unto the children of men.”<sup>7</sup> He wanted to keep His covenant and make possible our return home. What does He ask us to do in return? He simply pleads with us to confess our sins and repent so that we will not have to suffer as He did.<sup>8</sup> He invites us to become clean so that we are not left outside of our Father in Heaven’s house.

Although avoidance of sin is the preferred pattern in life, as far as the efficacy of the Atonement of Jesus Christ is concerned, it matters not what sins we have committed or how deep we have sunk into that proverbial pit. It matters not that we are ashamed or embarrassed because of the sins that, as the prophet Nephi said, “so easily beset” us.<sup>9</sup> It matters not that once upon a time we traded our birthright for a mess of pottage.<sup>10</sup>

What does matter is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” so “that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people.”<sup>11</sup> What does matter is that He was willing to condescend,<sup>12</sup> to come to this earth and descend “below all things”<sup>13</sup> and suffer “more powerful contradictions than any man” ever could.<sup>14</sup> What does matter is that Christ is pleading our case before the Father, “saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; . . . wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name,

that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.”<sup>15</sup> That is what really matters and what should give all of us renewed hope and a determination to try one more time, because He has not forgotten us.<sup>16</sup>

I testify that the Savior will never turn away from us when we humbly seek Him in order to repent; will never consider us to be a lost cause; will never say, “Oh no, not you again”; will never reject us because of a failure to understand how hard it is to avoid sin. He understands it all perfectly, including the sense of sorrow, shame, and frustration that is the inevitable consequence of sin.

Repentance is real and it works. It is not a fictional experience or the product “of a frenzied mind.”<sup>17</sup> It has the power to lift burdens and replace them with hope. It can lead to a mighty change of heart that results in our having “no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.”<sup>18</sup> Repentance, of necessity, is not easy. Things of eternal significance rarely are. But the result is worth it. As President Boyd K. Packer testified in his last address to the Seventy of the Church: “The thought is this: the Atonement leaves no tracks, no traces. What it fixes is fixed. . . . The Atonement leaves no traces, no tracks. It just heals, and what it heals stays healed.”<sup>19</sup>

And so it is that our hope to live again with the Father depends on the Atonement of Jesus Christ, upon the willingness of the one sinless Being to take upon Himself, notwithstanding the fact that justice had no claim on Him, the collective weight of the transgressions of all mankind, including those sins that some sons and daughters of God unnecessarily choose to suffer for on their own.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we

attribute greater power to the Savior’s Atonement than most other people because we know that if we make covenants, continually repent, and endure to the end, He will make us joint heirs with Him<sup>20</sup> and, like Him, we will receive all that the Father hath.<sup>21</sup> That is an earth-shattering doctrine, and yet it is true. The Atonement of Jesus Christ makes the Savior’s invitation to “be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”<sup>22</sup> perfectly possible rather than frustratingly out of reach.

The scriptures teach that every individual must “be judged according to the holy judgment of God.”<sup>23</sup> On that day there will be no opportunity to hide among a larger group or point to others as an excuse for our being unclean. Gratefully, the scriptures also teach that Jesus Christ, He who suffered for our sins, who is our Advocate with the Father, who calls us



His friends, who loves us unto the end, He ultimately will be our judge. One of the often overlooked blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ is that “the Father . . . hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”<sup>24</sup>

Brothers and sisters, if you feel discouraged or wonder if you can ever get out of the spiritual hole that you have dug, please remember who stands “betwixt [us] and justice,” who is “filled with compassion towards the children of men,” and who has taken upon Himself our iniquities and transgressions and “satisfied the demands of justice.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, as Nephi did in his moment of self-doubt, simply remember “in whom [you] have trusted,”<sup>26</sup> even Jesus Christ, and then repent and experience yet again “a perfect brightness of hope.”<sup>27</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

#### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 27:19.
2. See Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:22–28; *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 209.
3. Moses 1:39.
4. See *Lectures on Faith* (1985), 59, 60.
5. See Mark 14:36.
6. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:19.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 19:19.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16, 20.
9. 2 Nephi 4:18.
10. See Genesis 25:29–33.
11. Alma 7:11, 12.
12. See 1 Nephi 11:16, 26.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 88:6; see also Doctrine and Covenants 122:8.
14. *Lectures on Faith*, 59.
15. Doctrine and Covenants 45:4–5.
16. See Isaiah 44:21.
17. Alma 30:16.
18. Mosiah 5:2.
19. Boyd K. Packer, general conference training meeting, Apr. 7, 2015.
20. See Romans 8:17.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
22. Matthew 5:48.
23. 2 Nephi 9:15.
24. John 5:22.
25. Mosiah 15:9.
26. 2 Nephi 4:19.
27. 2 Nephi 31:20.