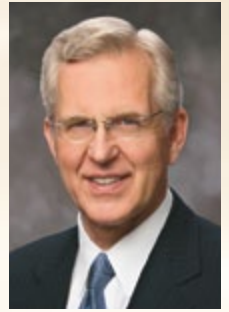




By Elder D. Todd
Christofferson

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



TO ALWAYS REMEMBER HIM

When we always remember the Savior, we can “cheerfully do all things that lie in our power,” confident that His power and love for us will see us through.

The sacramental prayers confirm that one of the central purposes of the sacrament as instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ is that we might “always remember him” (D&C



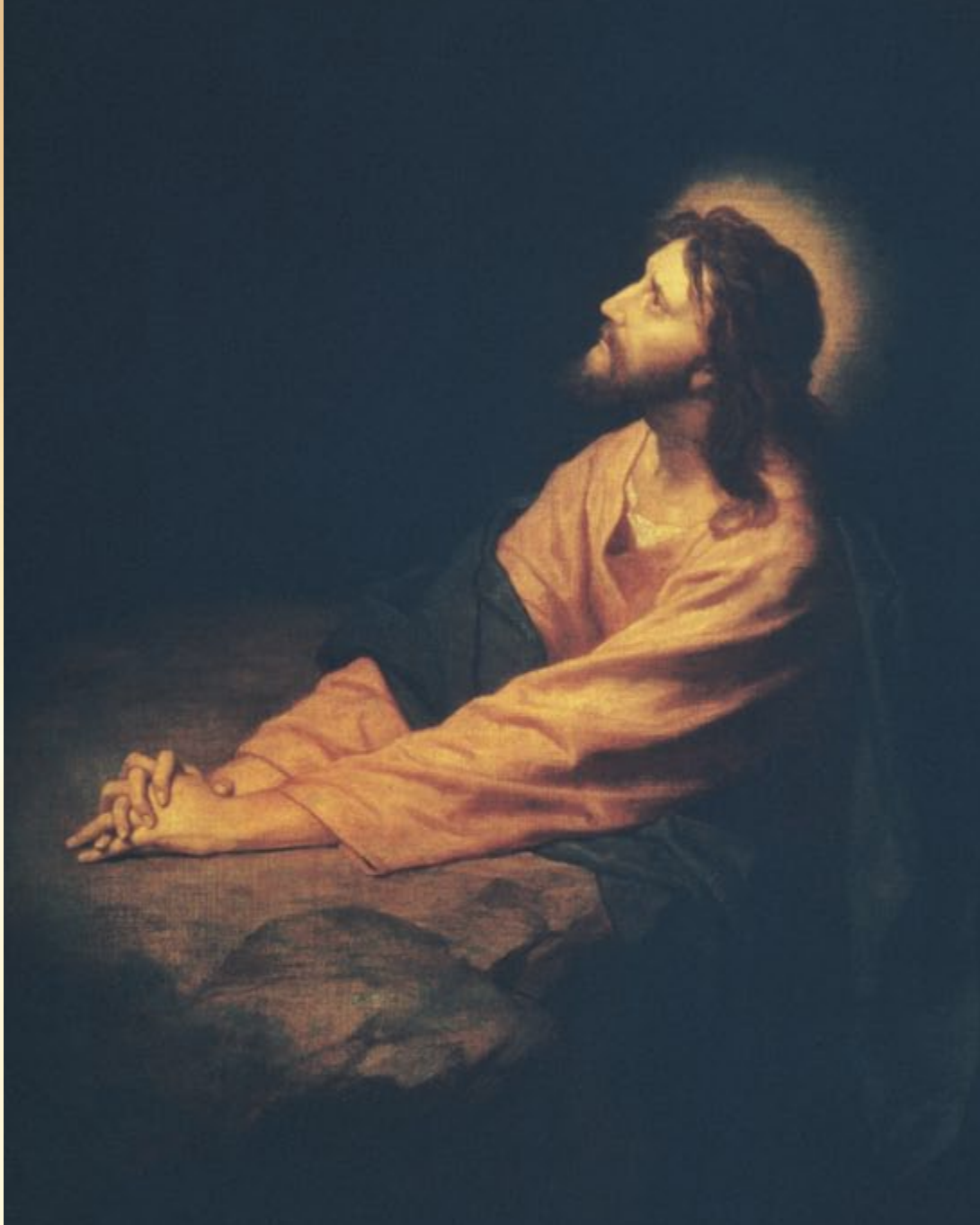
20:77, 79). Remembering the Savior obviously includes remembering His Atonement, which is symbolically represented by the bread and water as emblems of His suffering and death. We must never forget what He did for us, for without His Atonement and Resurrection, life

would have no meaning. With His Atonement and Resurrection, however, our lives have eternal, divine possibilities.

I wish to elaborate on three aspects of what it means to “always remem-

ber him”: first, seeking to know and follow His will; second, recognizing and accepting our obligation to answer to Christ for every thought, word, and action; and third, living with faith and without fear so that we can always look to the Savior for the help we need.

You and I can put Christ at the center of our lives and become one with Him as He is one with the Father. We can begin by stripping everything out of our lives and then putting it back together in priority order with the Savior at the center.



1. Seek to know and follow the will of Christ just as He sought the will of the Father.

The sacramental blessing on the bread commits us to be willing to take upon us the name of the Son “and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]” (D&C 20:77). It would also be appropriate to read this covenant as “always remember Him to keep His commandments.” This is how He always remembered the Father. As He said, “I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek

not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30).

Jesus achieved perfect unity with the Father by submitting Himself, both body and spirit, to the will of the Father. Referring to His Father, Jesus said, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). Because it was the Father’s will, Jesus submitted even to death, “the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father” (Mosiah 15:7). His focus on the Father is one of the principal reasons Jesus’s ministry had such clarity and power.

In the same way, you and I can put Christ

at the center of our lives and become one with Him as He is one with the Father (see John 17:20–23). We can begin by stripping everything out of our lives and then putting it back together in priority order with the Savior at the center. We should first put in place the things that make it possible to always remember Him—frequent prayer and scripture study, thoughtful study of apostolic teachings, weekly preparation to partake of the sacrament worthily, Sunday worship, and recording and remembering what the Spirit and experience teach us about discipleship.

Other things may come to your mind particularly suited to you at this point in your life. Once we make adequate time and means for these matters in centering our lives in Christ, we can begin to add other responsibilities and things of value, such as education and family responsibilities. In this way the essential will not be crowded out of our lives by the merely good, and things of lesser value will take a lower priority or fall away altogether.

I recognize that aligning our will to that of Jesus Christ as He aligned His will to the Father's is something not easily achieved. President Brigham Young (1801–77) spoke understandingly of our challenge when he said:

“After all that has been said and done, after he has led this people so long, do you not perceive that there is a lack of confidence in our God? Can you perceive it in yourselves? You may ask, [Brother] Brigham, do you perceive it in yourself? I do, I can see that I yet lack confidence, to some extent, in him whom I trust.—Why? Because I have not the power, in consequence of that which the fall has brought upon me. . . .

“ . . . Something rises up within me, at times[,] that measurably draws a dividing line

between my interest and the interest of my Father in heaven; something that makes my interest and the interest of my Father in heaven not precisely one.

“I know that we should feel and understand, as far as possible, as far as fallen nature will let us, as far as we can get faith and knowledge to understand ourselves, that the interest of that God whom we serve is our interest, and that we have no other, neither in time nor in eternity.”¹

Though it may not be easy, we can consistently press forward with faith in the Lord. I can attest that over time our desire and capacity to always remember and follow the Savior will grow. We should patiently work toward that end and pray always for the discernment and divine help we need. Nephi counseled, “I say unto you that ye must pray always, and not faint; that ye must not perform any thing unto the Lord save in the first place ye shall pray unto the Father in the name of Christ, that he will consecrate thy performance unto thee, that thy performance may be for the welfare of thy soul” (2 Nephi 32:9).

I witnessed a simple example of this kind of prayer when Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and I were assigned to conduct a videoconference interview of a couple in another country. Shortly before going into the studio, I reviewed once again the information we had collected about the couple and felt I was prepared for the interview. A few minutes before the appointed time, I saw Elder Oaks sitting alone with head bowed. In a moment he raised his head and said, “I was just finishing my prayer in preparation for this interview. We will need the gift of discernment.” He had not neglected the most important preparation, a prayer to consecrate our performance for our good and the Lord's glory.

Whatever we “get away with” in life or manage to hide from other people, we must still face when the inevitable day comes that we are lifted up before Jesus Christ, the God of pure and perfect justice.



2. Prepare to answer to Christ for every thought, word, and action.

The scriptures make it clear that there will be a great day of judgment when the Lord will stand to judge the nations (see 3 Nephi 27:16) and when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is the Christ (see Romans 14:11; Mosiah 27:31; D&C 76:110). The individual nature and extent of that judgment are described by Alma in the Book of Mormon:

“For our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; and our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God; and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence.

“But this cannot be; we must come forth and stand before him in his glory, and in his power, and in his might, majesty, and dominion, and acknowledge to our everlasting shame that all his judgments are just; that he is just in all his works, and that he is merciful unto the children of men, and that he has all power to save every man that believeth on his name and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance” (Alma 12:14–15).

When the Savior defined His gospel, this judgment was central to it. He said:

“Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

“And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had

been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

“And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works” (3 Nephi 27:13–15).

Being “lifted up upon the cross” is, of course, a symbolic way of referring to the Atonement of Jesus Christ by which He satisfied the demands that justice may have upon each of us. In other words, by His suffering and death in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, He paid all that justice could demand of us for our sins. He therefore stands in the place of justice and is the personification of justice. Just as God is love, God is also justice. Our debts and obligations now run to Jesus Christ. He, therefore, has the right to judge us.

That judgment, He states, is based on our works. The especially “good news” of His gospel is that He offers the gift of forgiveness conditioned on our repentance. Therefore, if our works include the works of repentance, He forgives our sins and errors. If we reject the gift of pardon, refusing to repent, then the penalties of justice that He now represents are imposed. He said, “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” (D&C 19:16–17).

Always remembering Him, therefore, means that we always remember that nothing is hidden from Him. There is no part of our lives, whether act, word, or even thought, that can be kept from the knowledge of the Father and the Son. No cheating on a test, no instance of shoplifting, no lustful fantasy or indulgence, and no lie is missed, overlooked, hidden, or forgotten. Whatever we “get away with” in life or manage to hide from other people, we must still face when the inevitable day comes that we are lifted up before Jesus Christ, the God of pure and perfect justice.

This reality has helped impel me at different times either to repentance or to avoid sin altogether. On one

occasion in connection with a home sale, there was an error in the documentation, and I found myself in a position where I was legally entitled to get more money from the buyer. My real estate agent asked if I wanted to keep the money since it was my right to do so. I thought about facing the Lord, the personification of justice, and trying to explain that I had a legal right to take advantage of the buyer and his mistake. I couldn’t see myself being very convincing, especially since I would probably be asking for mercy for myself at the same time. I knew I could not live with myself if I were so dishonorable as to keep the money. I replied to the agent that we would stick with the bargain as we all understood it originally. It is worth a great deal more to me than any sum of money to know that I have nothing to repent of in that transaction.

In my youth I once was negligent in a way that caused a minor injury to one of my brothers. I did not own up to my stupidity at the time, and no one ever knew about my role in the matter. Years later I was praying that God would reveal to me anything in my life that needed correction so that I might be found more acceptable before Him, and this incident came to my mind. I had forgotten about it, but the Spirit whispered that this was an unresolved transgression I needed to confess. I called my brother, apologized, and asked for his forgiveness, which he promptly and generously gave. My embarrassment and regret would have been less had I apologized when the accident happened.

It was interesting and significant to me that the Lord had not forgotten about that event of the distant past even though I had. Sins do not take care of themselves or simply fade away. Sins do not get “swept under the rug” in the eternal economy of things. They must be dealt with, and the wonderful thing is that because of the Savior’s atoning grace, they can be dealt with in a much happier and less painful manner than directly satisfying offended justice ourselves.

We should also take heart when thinking of a judgment in which nothing is overlooked because this also means that no act of obedience, no kindness, and no good deed however small is ever forgotten, and no corresponding blessing is ever withheld.

We know that challenges, disappointments, and sorrows will come to each of us in different ways, but we also know that in the end, because of our divine Advocate, all things can be made to work together for our good.



3. Fear not and look to the Savior for help.

In the infant days of the Restoration, Jesus counseled and comforted Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, who were working to translate the Book of Mormon and who would soon have the priesthood conferred upon them. Joseph was 23 years old at the time, and Oliver was 22. Persecution and other obstacles were frequent if not constant. In these conditions, in April 1829 the Lord spoke these words to them:

“Fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.

“Behold, I do not condemn you; go your ways and sin no more; perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you.

“Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.

“Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Amen” (D&C 6:34–37).

Looking unto the Savior in every thought is, of course, another way of saying “always remember him.” As we do, we need not doubt or fear. The Savior reminded Joseph and Oliver as He reminds us that through His Atonement He has been given all power in heaven and earth (see Matthew 28:18) and has both the capacity and will to protect us and minister to our needs. We need only be faithful, and we can rely implicitly on Him.

Preceding the comforting revelation to Joseph and Oliver, the Prophet endured a poignant, painful experience that taught him to look to the Savior and not fear the opinions, pressures, and threats of men.

In June 1828 Joseph allowed Martin Harris to take the first 116 pages of the Book of Mormon manuscript from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to show to family members in Palmyra, New York. After Martin failed to return as promised, an anxious Joseph traveled by stagecoach to his parents' home in Manchester Township, New York. The Prophet immediately sent for Martin. When Martin arrived, he admitted that he did not have the manuscript or know where it was.

Joseph exclaimed: "Oh! My God, my God. . . . All is lost, is lost. What shall I do? I have sinned. It is I that tempted the wrath of God by asking him for that which I had no right to ask. . . . Of what rebuke am I not worthy from the angel of the Most High?"

The next day the Prophet returned to Harmony. Once there, he said, "I commenced humbling myself in mighty prayer before the Lord . . . that if possible I might obtain mercy at his hands and be forgiven of all that I had done which was contrary to his will."²

After chastising Joseph for fearing man more than God, the Lord told him:

"Thou art Joseph, and thou wast chosen to do the work of the Lord, but because of transgression, if thou art not aware thou wilt fall.

"But remember, God is merciful; therefore, repent of that which thou hast done which is contrary to the commandment which I gave you, and thou art still chosen, and art again called to the work" (D&C 3:9–10).

"For a time, the Lord took the Urim and Thummim and the plates from Joseph. But these things were soon restored to him. 'The angel was rejoiced when he gave me back the Urim and Thummim,' the Prophet recalled, 'and said that God was pleased with my faithfulness and humility, and loved me for my penitence and diligence in prayer, in the which I had performed my duty so well as to . . . be able to enter upon the work of translation again.' As Joseph moved forward in the great work before him, he was now fortified

by the sweet feelings of receiving the Lord's forgiveness and a renewed determination to do His will."³

The Prophet's determination to rely upon God and not fear what men could do became fixed after this experience. His life thereafter was a shining example of what it means to remember Christ by relying upon His power and mercy. Joseph expressed this understanding during his very difficult and trying incarceration at Liberty, Missouri, in these words:

"You know, brethren, that a very large ship is benefited very much by a very small helm in the time of a storm, by being kept workways with the wind and the waves.

"Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us cheerfully do all things that lie in our power; and then may we stand still, with the utmost assurance, to see the salvation of God, and for his arm to be revealed" (D&C 123:16–17).

In short, to "always remember him" means that we do not live our lives in fear. We know that challenges, disappointments, and sorrows will come to each of us in different ways, but we also know that in the end, because of our divine Advocate, all things can be made to work together for our good (see D&C 90:24; 98:3). It is the faith expressed so simply by President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) when he would say, "Things will work out."⁴ When we always remember the Savior, we can "cheerfully do all things that lie in our power," confident that His power and love for us will see us through.

May we always remember Him—"that [we] may always have his spirit to be with [us]" (D&C 20:77). I bear my witness of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I bear witness of the reality of the living, resurrected Lord. I bear witness of the infinite and personal love of the Father and the Son for each of us, and I pray that we will live in constant remembrance of that love in all its expressions. ■

From an address delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on January 27, 2009. To listen to the address in English, visit web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches/default.aspx.

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, "Discourse," *Deseret News*, Sept. 10, 1856, 212.
2. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 69, 71.
3. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 71.
4. In Jeffrey R. Holland, "President Gordon B. Hinckley: Stalwart and Brave He Stands," *Liahona*, June 1995 special edition, 6; *Ensign*, June 1995, 4.