





By Elder
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Of the Seventy

The Redeeming and Strengthening Power of the Savior's Atonement

On his second day in the Provo Missionary Training Center, a young missionary knew he could not go another hour without talking to the president of the MTC. There were things in his life he should have cleared up with his bishop at home but had not. And so he turned and headed to the president's office.

In that moment the young missionary began a journey of repentance, humility, and hope. The path was not easy.

He went back to his home ward and faced the same people who had sent him off on his mission the week before. He got a job, began meeting with his bishop, and lived at home. He suffered. He felt guilt, sorrow, and pain. And there were times, especially at night, when he felt lonely and discouraged. But he never gave up. He spent a lot of time in the scriptures and on his knees.

Day after day, night after night, over many days and weeks, the redeeming and strengthening power of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ became a living reality in his life. The Savior reached out and took hold of that young man and changed him from the inside out. When he went back into the mission field, he was on fire. He became a mighty elder in Israel.

*There is no sin, no guilt, no shame,
no fear, no loneliness, no heartache,
no loss, no depression, no sadness,
no terror, no pain, no challenge,
no weakness that Jesus Christ has
not experienced and overcome.*

I know that marvelous blessings flow into our lives through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. I bear that witness because I want the Atonement of Christ to work more powerfully in your lives. I want you to be converted more deeply unto the Lord so that in your trials you too will experience the redeeming and strengthening power of His Atonement.

Jesus Suffered for Us

In Gethsemane and on Calvary, Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins and suffered the “whole law of the demands of justice” (Alma 34:16) for us. He felt in His pure and sinless soul the searing torment of “a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness” (2 Nephi 9:14). He suffered the agony of spiritual death “as to things pertaining unto righteousness” (Alma 5:42) and the “awful chains” (2 Nephi 28:22) of Satan’s power and captivity.¹

In that magnificent act of love and sacrifice, Jesus suffered “pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind” (Alma 7:11)²—indeed, “the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21). In the words of Isaiah:

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . .

“ . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4–5).

There is no sin, no guilt, no shame, no fear, no loneliness, no heartache, no loss, no depression, no sadness, no terror, no pain, no challenge, no weakness that Jesus has not experienced and overcome. He has all power over all things.

If you turn to Christ and repent of your sins, He will forgive you and cleanse you and change your heart. This is the redeeming power of the Atonement. If you turn to Christ when you face challenges and need capacity beyond your own, He can strengthen you and magnify your capacity. This is the strengthening power of the Atonement.

If we come unto Christ and are faithful to our covenants, Jesus will sanctify all of our mortal experience to our

blessing both now and forever. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we may become more and more like Him—we may walk in the newness of life, His sons and daughters, clean, pure in heart, filled with the pure love of Christ, blessed with joy and happiness and peace in this life and eternal life in the world to come.

Act with Faith in Christ

In 1982 my father and mother submitted their papers to serve a mission. When the call came, it shocked my mother. They had been called to serve in the Philippines Davao Mission.

“No!” my mother exclaimed to my father. “You’ve got to call them and tell them we can’t go to the Philippines. Don’t they know you have asthma? And I don’t want to deal with all those lizards and bugs.”

My father reminded my mother that she had always encouraged him never to turn down a call from the Lord. She knew that was true, but that didn’t make her

feel any better. One night a few days later she woke my dad up at about 2:30 a.m.

“Did you hear that voice?” she asked.

“No, I didn’t hear any voice,” he replied.

“Well, I have heard the same voice three times tonight. It said,

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‘Why are you worrying? Don’t you know that I know he has asthma? I will take care of him and you. Get yourself ready to serve in the Philippines.’”

My mother and father went forward with faith in the Lord and had a marvelous experience in the Philippines. My father served as the first counselor in the mission presidency, and he and my mother trained hundreds of missionaries and thousands of faithful Latter-day Saints in preparation for the coming of wards and stakes on the island of Mindanao.



Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the first principle of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). The scriptures teach that “faith is the [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). When we have faith in Christ, we look forward with the eye of faith (see Ether 12:19) and see with sharpness and clarity the remarkable promises of the redeeming and strengthening powers of the Atonement coming to pass. These promises come alive in our minds through the power of the Spirit. Our hope in the power of Christ then becomes what the scriptures call “lively” (1 Peter 1:3), bright (see 2 Nephi 31:20), and “more excellent” (Ether 12:32). This is the hope that is an anchor to the soul.

In times of trial and at other times, these marvelous blessings can be ours when we look forward with the eye of faith and take righteous action. Looking forward with the eye of faith in times of trial, however, is not easy. The natural man in us looks forward with the eye of fear and sees only darkness, failure, and pain.

Fear does not go away easily. It resists our efforts to overcome it and returns easily. With faith in Christ and

personal determination, however, we can declare, “I am going to look forward with the eye of faith and take righteous action.”

When we see the future with faith and hope in Christ, and when we act on that faith, divine light and power flow into our lives. That light and power activate the bright, shining shield of faith in the armor of God that “quench[es] all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16).

In the strength of the Lord we can move forward to do what He wants done, paying no heed to ridicule and scorn, taking no counsel from our fears, setting doubt aside, overcoming discouragement with hope, and resisting temptation with our faith in Christ.

Obedience of the Heart and Soul

When we obey the commandments of the Lord with our heart and soul, especially through small and simple acts of goodness, kindness, and righteousness, the Holy Ghost ministers to us and the Lord strengthens us to accomplish His great work.

Obedience of the heart and soul embraces all of who we are: our behavior and our attitudes, our actions and our desires, our diligence and our love. That kind of willing obedience connects us to Christ in a powerful way and brings His Spirit, love, power, and joy into our lives. A casual, reluctant, surface kind of obedience will not do. The Lord requires of us obedience that is exact, willing, and deep. He wants obedience of the whole heart and soul.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) beautifully described the difference between reluctant and heart-and-soul obedience this way: “When obedience ceases to be an irritant and becomes our quest, in that moment God will endow us with power.”³

The great key to developing heart-and-soul obedience is to be obedient in small and simple things, like keeping the Sabbath day holy, saying our prayers, telling the truth, paying our tithing, following the Word of Wisdom, being kind to others, avoiding profanity, and honoring our promises.

Remember, obedience in small things creates a spirit of obedience in all things. Moreover, obedience in small things brings the Spirit into our lives and strengthens our faith in Christ and our resolve to do His will. It opens our hearts to Him and blesses us with the strength and discipline to withstand temptations to violate the law of chastity, succumb to greed and materialism, or fall into apostasy. Obedience in small things prepares us to give our hearts to the Lord so that we will accept and fulfill the increasingly



STRENGTH TO BEAR BURDENS

“Our Savior’s Atonement does more than assure us of immortality . . . and give us the opportunity to be cleansed from sin by repentance and baptism. His Atonement also provides the opportunity to call upon

Him who has experienced all of our mortal infirmities to give us the strength to bear the burdens of mortality.”

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2015, 64.

demanding personal assignments and commandments that come to us from the Lord throughout our lives.

If you strive to be obedient in small things, the Holy Ghost will be with you. You will act with faith in Christ never to do anything or go anywhere or say anything or watch anything that would drive away the Spirit. You will be a blessing to others. And you will be ready to obey with all your heart and soul, whatever the Lord commands.

The Eternal Family

In “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” living prophets teach us true doctrine about our eternal identity as husbands and wives, mothers and fathers of an eternal family.⁴ Through the Atonement of Christ, you and a beloved

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eternal companion can create an eternal family, experience the joy of heaven on earth, and return to the presence of Heavenly Father, “crowned with celestial glory” (D&C 101:65) and “raised to endless

happiness to inherit the kingdom of God” (Alma 41:4), “in [whose] presence is fulness of joy” (Psalm 16:11).

The prophetic window of the proclamation gives each of us a beautiful picture of what our future holds. These blessings come at different times to different people. In mortal life we often encounter unexpected delays and disappointments. But it is good to have in front of us a vivid picture of our divine destiny as sons and daughters of God. That picture is real. If you are faithful, you will realize that destiny.

I saw these principles come together one day as I sat in a temple sealing room. There, I watched as a young man and a young woman were sealed for time and all eternity. I knew the young man, and I knew of the path he had traveled. His life had been full of the pain and heartache of sin. Some of that pain he had brought upon himself; some had come by the actions of others. However, he had humbled himself



before the Lord, repented of his sins, and sought the redeeming and strengthening power of the Savior's Atonement.

I knew that the Lord Jesus Christ had blessed that young man with His forgiveness and His grace. As a result, he was about to be sealed in the temple of the Lord to a marvelous young woman. I also knew the path she had walked. I knew of her goodness and the great faith that had sustained her in difficult hours. I looked across the room at the young man's mother. I could see on her face pure joy as tears flowed down her cheeks.

As I watched this beautiful scene, there came into my mind words I knew were from the Holy Ghost. Through those words, I came to understand that this is why Jesus suffered the crushing agony of the Atonement—so that this young man and this young woman could be clean and worthy, healed and whole, sealed forever by His power as husband and wife in the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.

I came to understand that this is why the Father sent His Son to suffer and die for us. This is why the Father and the Son appeared to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove and called him to be the great prophet of the Restoration. This is why Joseph received the power to translate the Book of Mormon; why he received the keys of this dispensation, including the sealing power; why he received the ordinances

and covenants of the temple and revelation upon revelation establishing the Lord's true and living Church on the earth.

And I came to understand that this is why, from the days of Joseph Smith until this very hour, the Lord has called living prophets to stand where Joseph stood, to hold the keys Joseph holds—so that you and I could be blessed with prophetic counsel and guidance, spiritual gifts, sacred ordinances in holy temples, courage and faith to walk in the light, repentance and forgiveness, and the power and authority of the keys of the priesthood of God. It is so that we might qualify for all the blessings of the temple of the Lord, be sealed to a beloved eternal companion, and have our children sealed to us forever in eternal life with our Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son.

This is why. ■

From a devotional address, "All Things Which Are Good Cometh of Christ," delivered at Brigham Young University–Idaho on March 31, 2015. For the full address, go to web.byui.edu/devotionalsandspeeches.

NOTES

1. See Richard G. Scott, "He Lives! All Glory to His Name," *Ensign*, May 2010, 76–77.
2. Coupled with the Savior's sinless life and His submission to His Father's will, His parentage gave Him ultimate spiritual purity, holiness, sensitivity, and discernment housed in a physical body subject to all the experiences of mortal life. Jesus experienced what mortal beings experience, but He felt those experiences more acutely and more intensely than mortals do.
3. Ezra Taft Benson, in Donald L. Staheli, "Obedience—Life's Great Challenge," *Ensign*, May 1998, 82.
4. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 129.