

The Prince of Glory



BY ELDER BRUCE D. PORTER
Of the Seventy

Christ literally overcame the world and stands as our friend—a Prince who has lived among us and knows how to make us strong.

At this season, when we commemorate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, I often think of the angel's words to Nephi regarding that sacred event: "Knowest thou the condescension of God?" (1 Nephi 11:16). A Latter-day Saint hymn speaks of His condescension in these words:

*The King of Kings left worlds of light,
Became the meek and lowly One.¹*

Why did the Lord Jesus Christ leave that world of light, where He dwelt with the Father in everlasting glory? Why did He come to earth in such humble circumstances?

A Story of a Prince

An important lesson about condescension is found in Mark Twain's classic novel *The Prince and the Pauper*. Twain tells of two boys: Tom Canty, a poor boy who lives

in a hovel in London; and Prince Edward of Wales, heir to the throne of England.

Tom has always dreamed what it would be like to be a prince. One day he decides to go to Westminster Palace in hopes of getting a glimpse of Prince Edward. Edward comes out of the gates of the palace and greets the waiting throngs. Tom is so excited that he presses up against the gates and tries to call the prince. The soldiers at the palace roughly push Tom away.

Seeing this, Prince Edward becomes angry with his guard. He tells the soldiers to leave the boy alone and then invites Tom into the palace as his guest. Prince Edward gives Tom a tour of the palace, and then, on a whim, the boys decide to exchange clothing. As they look at each other in the mirror, they realize that they are practically twins. While dressed in each other's clothing, they step outside. The soldiers grab the pauper (who is really the prince) and throw him outside the gates. Prince Edward



yells that he is the prince, but all the gathered people only laugh at him. The soldiers then close the gates. Suddenly the poor boy is the prince in the palace, while the prince is the poor boy in the street. Neither one can convince anyone to believe in the mix-up.

During the months that Prince Edward is outside the palace, he endures many trials. Tom Canty's father finds him, thinks the prince is his son, takes him home, and beats him. Edward experiences hunger that he's never known in his palace comfort. He travels throughout England, trying to determine how he can be restored to the throne. As he does so, he witnesses the poverty and oppression of his people, and he sees firsthand the grave injustices of the law. He suffers for months as a homeless pauper, and on one occasion he's nearly killed.

Through a remarkable series of events, the mix-up is finally resolved, and Prince Edward is restored to the palace. In the meantime he has inherited the throne and become the king of England. King Edward honors Tom Canty for his service as an accidental "prince," and ever after Edward serves as a merciful, good, and compassionate king, having learned to love his people by his suffering.

A Perfect Compassion

We too have a prince who became a pauper. The Prince of Peace, the Prince of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ came down to live among His people and share in their poverty and suffering so that He might be a more compassionate king. As the Apostle Paul said, "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In another letter Paul wrote: "In all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest. . . .

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18).

In other words, one of the reasons Christ came to earth was to experience temptation, pain, sorrow, and suffering so that He might be a more compassionate and perfect King. Alma spoke of this in a beautiful sermon to the people of Gideon: "And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people

. . . and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12).

Alma adds that “the Spirit knoweth all things; *nevertheless* the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people” (Alma 7:13; emphasis added). Although Christ had perfect compassion in his premortal role as Jehovah, His coming to earth and suffering personally in the flesh was essential to his atoning sacrifice.

By that suffering—not just in Gethsemane or on the cross but also throughout the whole 33 years of His life—the Lord Jesus Christ acquired perfect love and an all-encompassing understanding of mortal life. We may experience loneliness, betrayal, prejudice, scorn, and abuse. The Savior faced these things daily during His ministry. We may feel that our life is obscure, our days dull, and our talents and accomplishments meager in the eyes of the world. Christ made Himself of no reputation, having “no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (see Isaiah 53:4). Whatever depth of anguish, misery, or temptation we may experience, His understanding of our trials is perfect because He experienced them firsthand during His mortal life. Our Savior has walked with us. Immanuel, or “God with us” (Matthew 1:23), is one of His names.



The Savior is there not only when we cry out from the burden of sin but also when we cry out for any other reason.

An All-Encompassing Power

Having overcome the world, Christ possesses a redeeming power that is all-embracing and all-encompassing in its scope. There are many dimensions to that power. Most important is the redeeming power of the great Atonement

that paid the price for our sins—our individual sins as well as the sins of all mankind. Even the smallest sin we commit opens an infinite gulf between God and us, and it takes an infinite Atonement to overcome that. Only one who is “infinite and eternal” (Alma 34:14), as Amulek said, could pay that price.

In a most personal way, the Savior pleads for us before the Father’s throne. The Doctrine and Covenants says He is our advocate with the Father, standing before the Father and saying, “Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son. . . .

“Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name” (D&C 45:4–5).

When Christ pleads for us before the throne of the Father, He does not plead on the basis of our merit; He pleads on the basis of *His* merit and *His* suffering. Therefore, we must rely, as Nephi said, “wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19).

Further, the power of Christ is not limited to payment for our sins. Through that power, He also took upon Himself the pains and sicknesses of His people, and He took upon Himself every negative consequence of a fallen world. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the

Twelve Apostles said, “Since not all human sorrow and pain is connected to sin, the full intensiveness of the Atonement involved [Christ’s] bearing our pains, infirmities, and sicknesses, as well as our sins.”²

Serious illnesses, family tragedies, and emotional struggles do not happen necessarily because we have sinned. Adversity and heartbreak happen to good people; such is the fruit of a fallen world. But having experienced tragedy, sickness, and disappointment in His own life, the Savior knows how to strengthen us in such trials as well. He is there not only when we cry out from the burden of sin but also when we cry out for any other reason.

The power of the Atonement also covers the consequences of sin in the lives of innocent people. We pay no eternal price for things over which we have no control, including harm done to us by others. The Atonement can heal us. The only thing for which we pay a spiritual price is misuse of our own agency, and for that the Savior has given us the Atonement.

Sometimes we think of the power of the Atonement as something that works after this life, as though it were something that applied only at the Judgment Day. But that is not true doctrine. The redeeming power of Jesus Christ works *during* our lives, day by day, moment by moment, as He gives us strength to overcome, as He forgives us of sin, and as He brings us, through the Holy Ghost, comfort, peace, and joy.

My prayer and hope is that we will discover the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives, that we will understand that the Atonement is not something abstract. Christ literally

overcame the world and stands as our friend, a Prince who has lived among us and knows how to make us strong.

A Lesson at Christmas

In 1987 I was working for the United States government. About the middle of December I received a last-minute assignment to go to Israel. It was the Christmas season, when many tourists come to celebrate the birth of Christ. Violence in and around Israel, however, had kept them away.

On my last day in the Holy Land I was able to go to Jerusalem. I had been there before but never at Christmastime. I walked through the streets of the Old City on that cold, dreary, rainy day. Most of the Arab shopkeepers in the old city had closed their shops and everyone seemed unhappy.

Yet as I walked, umbrella in hand, I thought of the Savior of the world. Despite the cold, the rain, and the tense political atmosphere, I was filled with joy and peace to know that I was in the city where the Savior of the world had lived and taught.

I departed the next day for Washington, D.C., arriving a few days before Christmas. I landed at

Dulles International Airport and hailed a taxi. As we pulled out on the Capital Beltway, the traffic was awful. Everyone



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

“Relating personal experiences can have a powerful influence in helping others live gospel principles. When you tell about what you have experienced yourself, you act as a living witness of gospel truths. If you speak truthfully and with pure intent, the Spirit will confirm the truth of your message in the hearts of those you teach” (*Teaching, No Greater Call*, [1999] 180). In this article, Elder Porter teaches gospel truths by relating personal experiences. Consider inviting family members to share personal experiences in which their testimony of the Savior has been strengthened.

was trying to get home for Christmas. I started to lose patience and began fuming and fidgeting. The spirit of peace I had felt in Jerusalem drained away.

As we drove along, I kept saying to the taxi driver, “Try that lane. Move over there—no, go over there. Try that.” It took us well over an hour to get to my exit in Virginia. When we finally exited, we ran into the worst local traffic jam I had ever seen. I again started fuming and fidgeting and making suggestions to the driver. Suddenly he turned around, looked me in the eye, and said in a tone of mild rebuke, “Sir, there is no reason to be upset about a traffic jam.” Then he turned back around.

Sensing perhaps that I was a bit miffed, he looked at me again and said, “Pardon me. But you see, I am from another planet.”

“Very well,” I replied, “just what planet do you come from?”

I will never forget his reply. He turned around again and said in a calm voice, “I am from Afghanistan, a country devastated by war, and if you had seen the things I have seen—villages bombed, people starving, men and women and children fleeing for their lives, and war and destruction and chaos on every side—you would not worry so much about a mere traffic jam.” Then he turned around again and drove on silently.

His words pierced me. Suddenly I saw everything in perspective. I lived in a free country in the midst of prosperity and peace. I was going home to a wonderful family in a home of our own, and we were going to celebrate Christmas together. I realized that I had everything in the world a person could

possibly want, including the gospel of Jesus Christ. And there I was, getting upset at a simple traffic jam, which meant nothing at all.

Two days later my alarm clock sounded on the Sabbath before Christmas, and the radio played these words from “O Holy Night”:

*The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger,
In all our trials born to be our friend.*³



GREY DAY GOLGOTHA, BY J. KIRK RICHARDS

I thought of my visit to Jerusalem. I thought of a humble taxi driver who had taught me an important lesson. Then I thought of Jesus Christ, who was born to be the friend of the lowly and the hope of the meek. My heart brimmed with love, and tears flowed freely as I thought that He might regard me as a friend.

This is my testimony—that each of us has a friend in our Redeemer. The Prince of Peace lived on earth as a poor, simple, and humble

man, but He was in fact the Son of God. He knows our trials and our pains, our temptations and our suffering of every kind. I pray that no matter what your personal trial, challenge, temptation, difficulty, or sin may be, you will come unto Him who was born in Bethlehem and resurrected on the third day in Jerusalem. ■

From a devotional address given at LDS Business College on March 12, 2002. For the full text, see www.ldsbc.edu/speeches/devotionals/display.php?id=13032002.

By His suffering—not just in Gethsemane or on the cross but also throughout the whole 33 years of His life—the Lord Jesus Christ acquired perfect love and an all-encompassing understanding of mortal life.

NOTES

1. “Thy Will, O Lord, Be Done,” *Hymns*, no. 188.
2. Neal A. Maxwell, *Not My Will, But Thine* (1988), 51.
3. “Cantique de Noël” (“O Holy Night”), *Recreational Songs* (1949), 142–44.