

# “One Being Is as Precious in His Sight as the Other”

BARBARA DAY LOCKHART

Good morning, brothers and sisters. I am grateful for the honor of addressing you in this capacity. I’m sorry that President Lee couldn’t be here. He called yesterday to express his disappointment. I think he wouldn’t mind if I started with the story that I had planned to. He has such a wonderful sense of humor. I selected a story that would be fitting for a devotional because it has a religious theme. I’ll just change one of the main characters.

These two fellows died and went to heaven. When they reached the pearly gates, Saint Peter greeted them and said, “Come with me. I’ll show you where you are going to live.”

The first man he took to what appeared to be a tiny hut. The other he escorted to a gorgeous mansion. It was beautiful—gold trim, the works! An onlooker said, “Saint Peter, I do not mean to tell you your business, but wasn’t that the Pope you took over to that hut? And wasn’t that Provost Bruce Hafen you took to that mansion?”

“Well, yes,” said Saint Peter, “but don’t fret. Everything is just as it should be. You see, we have a number of popes here, but this is our very first lawyer!”

Isn’t it pretty silly to think that this story would depict how it is? But, as evident in the

world today, we mortals can easily be fooled. Seeking identity from the world brings trouble—it is a mirage. Seeking identity from the Lord brings truth—it is real.

I am grateful to be a part of the BYU community, a university in which the whole of what we do can be grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I love President Benson and testify that he is a living prophet of God. It is marvelous to have the privilege of being associated with a university that is guided by living prophets. What a thrill it is for me to be here. At other universities I have been able to teach similar principles but never to identify the source. So to be free to do that here is just as if the lid has been taken off. It is a marvelous experience and opportunity.

Today I pray that the Spirit will be with us in abundance. I am thankful for the assistance I have received in preparing this talk. I am thankful for loving friends who are here today and am grateful for your prayers.

In January 1992 President Rex E. Lee delivered his winter devotional address, which he

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*Barbara Day Lockhart was a professor in the Department of Physical Education at BYU when this devotional address was given on 12 May 1992.*

entitled “Things That Change, and Things That Don’t.” I was elated to hear this distinguished university president testify of the reality of absolute truth. In his talk he declared, “Throughout your lives, you will come across some people who will assure you with great solemnity that there is no such thing as an absolute. In these people’s view, everything is relative. . . . Most of those people are very sincere. And all of them are dead wrong” (*BYU 1991–92 Devotional and Fireside Speeches* [Provo: Brigham Young University, 1992], p. 54).

I enthusiastically add my testimony of absolutes to that of President Lee’s. Absolute truth is that which is eternal—its source is beyond this world. It comes to us from God. We can respond to that truth, we can embrace it and be devoted to it, but it is not of our own making.

The main thrust of my talk today is basing self-acceptance on absolute, eternal values as opposed to the usual practice of basing self-acceptance on competence, achievements, appearance, or, in other words, the things of the world. Incorporating these eternal verities into our lives is essential to our progress and to living the first and second great commandments. Unless we base our acceptance of self and others on these absolute truths, we are not able to see ourselves as the Lord sees us, “as we really are.” In the Book of Mormon, Jacob chastised his well-to-do brethren for persecuting those who were of lesser means. He admonished them for the pride in their hearts, for thinking they were better than others because of the costliness of their apparel and because of their advantaged position and riches.

*Do ye not suppose that such things are abominable unto him who created all flesh? And the one being is as precious in his sight as the other. And all flesh is of the dust; and for the selfsame end hath he created them, that they should keep his commandments and glorify him forever. [Jacob 2:21]*

*And he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile. [2 Nephi 26:33]*

I know that every person is precious in the sight of God. At the conclusion of an address to religious educators that he gave last February, Elder Dallin H. Oaks spoke of the importance of knowing how God sees us: “I hope you will help your students feel their relationship to God, feel his concern for them, and feel his love for them” (“Sins, Crimes, and Atonement,” CES address, Temple Square Assembly Hall, Salt Lake City, Utah, 7 February 1992, p. 8).

Why do I feel so strongly that it is imperative that we know the Savior’s love for us and have reverence for our own lives? It is such a waste of a beautiful life when any person feels that he or she is no good. I know. I have lived on both sides of this issue. For more than half of my life, I did not like who I was. It was dark, lonely. On the surface everything seemed great, but inwardly I feared that if anyone really knew me, they wouldn’t like me. The confusing thing to me was, with all the accomplishments I was racking up, I still did not have a good sense of self.

Heavenly Father tells me in my patriarchal blessing that he loves me. I read those words for ten years, and they never sank in. By the time I was thirty-two, I was desperate to know if I was loved. This disparity between the “outside” me and the “inside” me came to be more than I could stand, and in a most earnest prayer I pleaded with Heavenly Father to know if he loved me. The answer was one I could not doubt or deny. Luckily, it was affirmative! Then I couldn’t reconcile this knowledge of being loved with how I felt about myself. If I don’t love myself I am telling Father he is wrong, or that he has bad taste! It took nearly six months of prayer, repenting,

and pretending that I loved myself before I could come to genuinely be glad to be me. Then my whole life changed.

What an incredible difference to be able to honestly thank the Lord for who you are, to be grateful and happy to be you instead of disliking yourself or feeling pressure to be more than you are. Because of the world we live in today, everyone has to overcome the influences that seem to tear us down or falsely build us up. I can tell you with feeling that real acceptance of self does not come through worldly accomplishments or acceptance by others. Of course these things feel good and can be exciting and positive aspects of life. But thinking that acceptance of self comes from succeeding in the world is a very effective ploy of the adversary. Love for self; a deep, abiding peace; and knowing who you really are come from only one source—from God. Knowing you are loved and knowing true peace are invaluable. Anything else in the world pales by comparison. Knowing that Heavenly Father truly loves us and trusting that it is vital to Heavenly Father that we come home to him are some of the greatest motivators that we can have to give us the genuine desire to be true to him. With reverence for self based on God's love, we will reject the temptations that otherwise would draw us to the pride of the world. We would love nothing more than God.

You can imagine how excited I was to hear the words of President Benson in his classic address "Beware of Pride" in April 1989 general conference. "The proud depend upon the world to tell them whether they have value or not. Their self-esteem is determined by where they are judged to be on the ladders of worldly success." Then President Benson described how we come to have a valid, true sense of self: "If we love God, do His will, and fear His judgment more than men's, we will have self-esteem" (*Ensign*, May 1989, p. 6).

Acceptance for self that is generated by the world is fake. By virtue of its very nature,

"other-directed self-esteem" will constantly vacillate, alternating highs and lows. It has to, because it is not possible to always succeed. Therefore, if acceptance is based on success, then lack of success must mean lack of acceptance. How could that be right? If that were so, instead of learning from our mistakes, every difficulty would cause us to think less of ourselves.

"You can never get enough of what you don't need, because what you don't need never satisfies," said Mary Ellen Edmunds in the Relief Society sesquicentennial broadcast ("A World of Experience," *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 97). Worldly self-esteem is never satisfied; you achieve or acquire more and more but still feel empty inside. Without charity, the pure love of Christ, we are nothing (see Moroni 7:46–47). Acceptance of self based on God's love is real. This true reverence for self is deep, filled with gratitude and peace, and is ever-present even in the face of life's most difficult trials. As each person is as precious in his sight as the other, each one has ready access to honest, lasting, real self-acceptance.

A very practical blessing of the restored gospel is that we know the absolute truths that provide the foundation for having a good sense of self. Once self-acceptance is based on this sure, absolute foundation, then you will be free to aspire, achieve, excel. Then you will be giving of yourself out of gratitude to the Lord, to serve the Lord, to magnify your talents, to do his work. You will not be out there on your own agenda, killing yourself to be somebody, to measure up to someone else's expectations, and obsessed with the need to be accepted. Your whole motive will arise from your love for him, your trust in his love for you, your desire to do his will.

So what is the formula? What are the absolutes, the "things that don't change" that are the basis for a genuine, real, stable, secure self?

1. *We are literal spirit children of heavenly parents.* In a statement of the First Presidency under Joseph F. Smith, we are told that we are “offspring of celestial parentage” and that “all men and women are in the similitude of the universal Father and Mother, and are literally the sons and daughters of Deity” (“The Origin of Man,” *Improvement Era*, November 1909, pp. 75–81). Elder Packer testified in April 1992 conference,

*No greater ideal has been revealed than the supernal truth that we are the children of God, and we differ, by virtue of our creation, from all other living things. (See Moses 6:8–10, 22, 59.)*

*No idea has been more destructive of happiness, no philosophy has produced more sorrow, more heartbreak and mischief; no idea has done more to destroy the family than the idea that we are not the offspring of God. [Boyd K. Packer, “Our Moral Environment,” *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 67; emphasis in original]*

Obviously, some people do not have a clue as to their divine nature, and others seem to have a glimpse of this noble birthright. How would each of our lives be different if our divine nature were the primary factor on which we based our identity? When asked who you are, what comes to mind?

2. *We are soul, body and spirit, and every soul will be resurrected.* Why is this absolute truth important as we strive to see ourselves as the Lord sees us? According to self-esteem studies, in the way the world views us, the number-one factor in determining whether we have self-esteem or not is appearance. A student in our Philosophy of Body, Mind, Spirit course this past semester wrote of how angry she was upon realizing that she had been victimized into thinking she was not attractive. Dieting, eating disorders, disparaging attitudes, and other destructive behaviors are rampant as we are driven toward an obsession with “the outward appearance.” “For the Lord seeth not as

man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Laurie concluded her final paper with these thoughts:

*I believe that because we are refusing to take responsibility for our bodies, falsifying our outside image, which cannot but serve to canker our souls, we are ultimately forfeiting the right to become like God. . . . We must make from our physical selves a being fit to be a god, and never, never despise that which sets us apart from the hosts of Satan — our bodies, however flawed, however imperfect. If we reverence our body and spirit, as does the Lord, we cannot be false to ourselves! The face that we fashion will be the one that God has given. And so, I would ask, Have you received his image in your countenance? [Laurie Harris, “His Image in Our Countenance,” final paper, winter 1992, p. 6; paper in possession of speaker]*

Why would we not have reverence for our body as a glorious aspect of our divine self? “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also” (D&C 130:22). “The spirit and the body are the soul of man” (D&C 88:15). By nature we are more like God now than we were in the premortal existence. The body is a primary blessing in our process of moving forward. Immune research of the past several decades gives astounding proof as to the totally interactive functioning of the emotions, mind, and body. We are soul by definition, and we function and live as soul. If we think of our body as negative, something the spirit needs to dominate, or something we would rather do without, we put ourselves in a state of contention. And we know that contention is of the devil and not of the Lord (3 Nephi 11:29). The Lord said, “Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27). I think that sentiment is wonderfully applicable to our own soul as well as to our relations with others. As we have reverence for our bodies, our whole soul, we will be motivated to

completely value ourselves and be gentle with ourselves. Are you grateful for your body as well as for your spirit?

Mickey Trockel told a story in class that illustrated the “victimization” of letting another person define us. A naturalist who saw an eagle in a chicken coop questioned the farmer as to why this eagle was in with the chickens? The farmer replied that the eagle was now a chicken. He had taught him to be a chicken and to peck corn along with all the other chickens. Thinking this was ridiculous, the naturalist took the eagle up a ladder and told it to spread its wings and fly away. The eagle jumped down into the coop and pecked corn with the other chickens.

The naturalist was not to be discouraged. He took the eagle up to the top of the barn and told it to spread its wings and fly away, but the same thing happened again. “This just cannot be,” thought the naturalist. He asked the farmer if he might take him to a high cliff and try again.

The farmer laughed, “You can try anything, but I tell you, the eagle has learned that it is a chicken.”

The naturalist took the eagle high on a cliff and told it to spread its wings and fly away. The eagle looked to the sun, then spread its wings and soared over the valley. We can let others victimize us, even try to define us, but only when we look to the Son, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, will we know and appreciate ourselves as we really are.

3. *Each person, each soul, is of infinite and eternal worth and value.* The Lord explicitly assures us of our worth and value to him.

*Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God;*

*For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. [D&C 18:10–11]*

Jesus did not wait to see how we would live before he gave his life for us. The truth is that the worth of each unique life is divine, infinite, and cannot be taken away. The worth of the soul means worth of the whole soul, the whole person—spirit and body. Our worth cannot be manipulated by others, it cannot be increased or decreased. I jumped for joy upon discovering the following statements in Elder Maxwell’s marvelous book *Men and Women of Christ*. Talking about knowing our true identity, he said: “This is one of the great but underappreciated blessings of the restored gospel. It richly assures us of our intrinsic value and of our eternal and ultimate worth” (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991, p. 128).

Because worth is an absolute aspect of life, it will always exist. Of course, it is difficult to realize our worth to God if we are not living his commandments. Elder Maxwell also said, “There is more individuality in those who are more holy. Sin, on the other hand, brings sameness; it shrinks us to addictive appetites and insubordinate impulses” (“Repentance,” *Ensign*, November 1991, p. 30). A person may lose sight of his or her worth, but that person’s worth is always great in the sight of God. A human life is always of utmost worth because that worth is eternal and cannot be erased. Isn’t it great to know? Worthless is not an option.

4. *The influence of the Holy Ghost always produces joy and satisfaction.* Long ago George Q. Cannon gave this advice:

*I will tell you a rule by which you may know the Spirit of God from the spirit of evil. The Spirit of God always produces joy and satisfaction of mind. When you have that Spirit you are happy; when you have another spirit you are not happy. The spirit of doubt is the spirit of the evil one; it produces uneasiness and other feelings that interfere with happiness and peace. [JD 15:375]*

President Benson said, “Most of us consider pride to be a sin of those on the top, such as the

rich and the learned, looking down at the rest of us. (See 2 Nephi 9:42.) There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up” (“Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, p. 5). This means that thinking negatively about ourselves is a form of pride. The natural man is an enemy to God, and therefore full of pride. Putting off the natural man, in part, means putting off attitudes of self-deprecation, to stop putting ourselves down. I once heard integrity defined as not thinking or saying negative things about ourselves.

How dependent are we on others for approval or worldly recognition to feel happiness? Here is a marvelous statement from the School Sayings of Confucius: “The orchid that grows in the deep gorges does not withhold its fragrance because of lack of appreciation. The wise person strives for establishment of virtue and maintenance of principles. He does not alter his integrity because of poverty and distress.”

If we do not fear people’s judgment but instead yield to the enticing of the Spirit, we will find that the Holy Ghost does fill us with love and joy. Why do we look elsewhere for happiness?

5. *Each person, each soul, is always loved.* John the Beloved taught us that God is love. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us” (1 John 4:10).

We do not initiate love. It is another absolute. It is already there. It is always there. How do we relate to God’s love? We receive it, respond to it, are grateful for it—we love it! As Dennis Rasmussen has written in his provocative, insightful book, *The Lord’s Question: Thoughts on the Life of Response* (Provo: Keter Foundation, 1985):

*Only by responding do I learn to be responsible; only by responding do I learn to care about something beyond myself.* [p. 4]

*[The] response of obedience is the free response of love.* [p. 7]

*Deep in every human heart is the desire to be known and loved just for oneself.* [p. 9]

*God knows that self already. To guide but not to compel man toward his own true self, God asks his question. As man responds with love, he becomes the self that God knows and wants him to be.* [p. 8]

Scott Giles, of BYU football fame, gave permission for us to share his perspective:

*As a youngster, before one particular game, I turned to my mom and asked, “Mom, will you love me even if we lose and I don’t play very well?”*

*“Scott, I love you no matter what happens. If you win or lose I love you all the same.”*

*This brought peace to my heart and took the added pressure off of my shoulders. I knew then that my mother’s love was not based on the things I did but she loved me because of who I am. In my life I have seen that many people wanted to be with me because of my successes with football, but their friendship and attitudes changed depending on how successful or unsuccessful I was. While serving an LDS mission I learned that Heavenly Father loves all of his children. He looks upon the heart and soul. He does not weigh a person’s worth by the way they dress or the things they have accomplished or attained. His love is an intrinsic part of the gift of life. Sometimes I do not achieve that which I wanted to accomplish or do the things that I should do, but I like myself. I like who and what I am. I am thankful for a Heavenly Father that loves me. He allows me to learn from my own choices but still loves and values the things that are truly me.*

This is an especially moving account because I believe that the more talented you are, the more beautiful, the more money, etc., the more difficult it is to realize that you are loved by Heavenly Father. Picture the mist of

darkness in Lehi's dream that kept the people from finding and partaking of the fruit of the tree. Recognition and fame may cloud the true source of love.

Also, looking to the Savior for love does not minimize excellence—just the opposite happens. When you know you are loved for yourself, you can learn from your mistakes rather than having your ego destroyed. Without the fear of failure, or fear that you do not measure up, you are free to excel—not compelled, but free to give, to offer your best. Life becomes a process of giving rather than compulsive getting. Love and respect flow from Father through us to others.

I am greatly troubled when I read or hear that people think that God's love is conditional, something we need to earn. This so diminishes the omniscience of our Savior, our Redeemer. I had this humorous image while contemplating the folly of thinking that God's love was conditional. There were these two angels that were assigned to help God. One was the "thumbs-up" angel and the other the "thumbs-down" angel. These angels were assigned to observe the behaviors and attitudes of humans and then report them to God. The thumbs-up angel would make a list of the names of those people "who did good" that day. The thumbs-down angel would make a list of names of those people who didn't do so well for various reasons like "I hate myself," "I gained ten pounds," "Oh, that commandment is so hard to live," "How can I ever be seen in public with this hair?" Each angel would complete his list and deliver the list to God and then say, "These are the people you are not supposed to like today. These are the ones you *can* like today!"

Isn't this image silly? If that was the way God's love really worked, he surely would be kept busy by the lawyers!

God's love is unfeigned. His love is always perfect, always genuine. It certainly is not prone to manipulation. How absurd to think that we fashion God's love by our actions! As

Trevor R. McKee has explained in his writing, "Feigned love seeks recognition and praise. Unfeigned love is charity" ("Love Unconditional or Love Unfeigned: Justice and Mercy in Human Development," *AMCAP Journal*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1986, p. 56).

If God's love was conditional, it would cease to be a gift. If the process were that of earning love, then the one earning the love would get the credit. Logic tells us that this process is pride. We know that we are loved by way of the Holy Spirit. If we choose not to live by the Spirit, but choose to live as the natural man, the less likely we are to want God's love or to receive God's love.

*For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift. [D&C 88:33]*

When we receive the gift, when we yield to the enticing of the Spirit, we are filled with love. Filled with his love, we love God, we lose our desire to do evil, and, more than anything, we want to be like him and be with him. Once we are filled with his love, we cannot help but stand in awe of his love for us and be grateful for who we are. When we realize that each and every person is loved by Heavenly Father, it prompts us to love each and every person, too.

Do you know you are loved? It is my most fervent prayer that you do know you are loved.

6. *We are totally dependent on Jesus for eternal life.* There is free lunch (see Hugh Nibley, "Work We Must, but the Lunch Is Free" in *Approaching Zion* [Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book Co. and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1989], pp. 202–51). In the October 1990 general conference, President Hunter discussed the meaning of taking the Savior's yoke upon us.

*Why face life's burdens alone, Christ asks, or why face them with temporal support that will quickly falter? To the heavy laden it is Christ's yoke, it is the power and peace of standing side by side with a God that will provide the support, balance, and the strength to meet our challenges and endure our tasks here in the hardpan field of mortality. ["Come unto Me," *Ensign*, November 1990, p. 18]*

The whole of what is real is based in the Savior. We are completely dependent on him. The Lord will provide. We can give to the world and not expect or need anything back. Our real work is his work; our real effort is simply to love him and do his will. He is the one who will change our hearts; he is the one who will refine us. We do not need to be macho about life. We not only do not need to progress on our own—we surely cannot do it without him.

Elder Oaks teaches:

*If justice is balance, then mercy is counterbalance. If justice is exactly what one deserves, then mercy is more benefit than one deserves. In its relationship to justice and mercy, the Atonement is the means by which justice is served and mercy is extended. We are all dependent upon the mercy God the Father extended to all mankind through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is the central reality of the gospel. This is why we "talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ. . . , that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26). The reality of our total dependence upon Jesus Christ for the attainment of our goals of immortality and eternal life should dominate every teaching and every testimony and every action of every soul touched by the light of the restored gospel. If we teach every other subject and principle with perfection and fall short on this one, we have failed in our most important mission. ["Sins, Crimes, and Atonement," pp. 2–3]*

According to Elder Maxwell, "Too often we behave as if we were in massive competition with others for God's love. But we have His love, unconditionally and universally; it is our love of Him that remains to be proven" (*Even As I Am* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1982], p. 63). The Lord showed to Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth. Enoch marveled at the incredible creation before him while Jehovah, himself, wept. And Enoch, puzzled by this, asked, "How is it thou canst weep?"

*The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency;*

*And unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood. [Moses 7:31–33]*

What we think of ourselves is of great concern to the Lord. He implores us to not hate ourselves and others. Can we even begin to fathom the love he has for us? His work and his glory is to have us come home to him. We are the focus of his existence. If we will trust in his love, receive it into our lives, we will want to walk with him always, live his commandments, and do his will. We will not want anything to come between ourselves and our Savior. In his faith-building talk "Believing Christ: A Practical Approach to the Atonement," Stephen E. Robinson assured us that the Lord is capable of doing his work. We have no need to fear; he can save us from our sins, from our weaknesses, inadequacies, and whatever else we feel we lack. It is one thing to believe in Christ but another to believe Christ. Listen to Brother Robinson's description:



*Many of us are trying to save ourselves, holding the Atonement of Jesus Christ at arm's distance and saying, "When I've done it, when I've perfected myself. . . , then I'll be worthy of the Atonement . . . ." [But] that's like saying, "When I am well, I'll take the medicine. I'll be worthy of it then."* [BYU 1989–90 Devotional and Fireside Speeches (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1990), p. 124]

In another inspiring talk recently given on this campus, "The Only Sure Foundation: Building on the Rock of Our Redeemer," Robert L. Millet testified,

*Sometimes we tend to focus so much upon the fact that Jesus Christ died for us that we do not attend to an equally important facet of his redemptive enterprise—the fact that he came to live in us. As we come to gain that life which is in Christ—a life which comes as we seek for and cultivate the Spirit of the Lord—we receive that enabling power which extends to us the strength to forsake and overcome, a power which we could not have generated on our own.* [Seventh Annual Book of Mormon Symposium, February 1992, p. 7]

In his richly meaningful book *The Broken Heart*, Bruce C. Hafen provides deep insight into the power of the Atonement.

*The Atonement not only pays for our sins, it heals our wounds—the self-inflicted ones and those inflicted from sources beyond our control. The Atonement also completes the process of our learning by perfecting our nature and making us whole. In this way, Christ's Atonement makes us as he is. It is the ultimate source of our forgiveness, our perfection, and our peace of mind.* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1989, p. 29]

If you have any doubt whether or not you can be saved by the grace of the Savior, just read over the phenomenal testimony of Elder Packer in the April 1992 conference. Quoting Orson F. Whitney, he said,

*The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught a more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.* [Orson F. Whitney, CR, April 1929, p. 110]

Are you planning now to eventually be home with Jesus? He is planning on you!

We are given to know the absolute truths that are the basis for solid, stable self-acceptance:

1. We are literal spirit children of heavenly parents.
2. We are soul, body and spirit, and every soul will be resurrected.
3. Each person, each soul, is of infinite and eternal worth and value.
4. The influence of the Holy Ghost always produces joy and satisfaction.
5. Each person, each soul, is always loved.
6. We are totally dependent on Jesus for eternal life.

These are virtues we do not need to earn, nor, in fact, can we earn. They are gifts from God. They are the essence of our being. If we truly trusted these absolutes, nothing else would matter enough to make us choose sin.

What a marvelous blessing we have to be taught on this campus by men and women who love the Savior. How privileged we are to

be directed by prophets of God, of whom the Lord has said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

You assembled here today are commissioned to bless the world.

*And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.* [3 Nephi 20:25]

We have been blessed to know the truth and given the responsibility to take that truth to all the world. Of all people, it makes no sense for us to feel that we are not worthy of him and his love. It keeps us from him. More than anything he wants us to walk with him every day. The adversary knows who you are and will continue to work doubly hard to deceive you, to keep you from fulfilling your covenant responsibilities, to make you miserable. How can we be a light to the world if we are trapped in the mist of darkness? How can we do Heavenly Father’s will when we are obsessed with making a name for ourselves? Isaiah has prophesied that Israel will continually forsake the Lord, but the Lord will never forsake Israel.

*For can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, O house of Israel.*

*Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.* [1 Nephi 21:15–16]

Will we trust that we do belong to our Redeemer? Will we exercise the faith to see ourselves as the Lord sees us?

We are of infinite value and worth to Christ. As we love him, have faith in him, and desire to be like him, he is the one who will change us, perfect us, and bring us home. Then he will give us all that he hath. How could we want for anything else?

There is nothing greater than his love for us. It is my humblest prayer that we will know his love, we will accept his love into our lives and realize our total dependence on him. Then shall our “confidence wax strong” (D&C 121:45). Then shall we have true gratitude for who we are and marvel at his goodness to us. Then shall we know the amazing peace from him, even in this life, that peace “which passeth all understanding” (see D&C 59:23; Philippians 4:7).

I know that Jesus lives! I love and adore my Redeemer. Jesus is the source of all that is real. He longs for each of us to know that we are precious in his sight. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.