

# Truths Most Worth Knowing

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I am very grateful for the blessings which allow you to see and hear me from across the earth. I am most grateful for the gift of the Holy Ghost, a miracle which requires no satellite transmission and allows me to picture you in your many places in my mind's eye. You are consummately precious. We look forward to the day when we can pass the keys of the kingdom on to you.

Rather than take notes, pay attention to the impressions you receive as we consider a most sacred topic. If all that you know after tonight is what you hear, then you will have missed the meaning of this discussion.

Some come with questions and are searching for direction. Others are wondering how they got off the gospel path and how they might return. While I speak to all, I speak most earnestly to the one who is seeking.

## Seek and Accept Guidance

I have watched my senior Brethren move around the circle and then graduate to the other side of the veil—so many great ones. President Harold B. Lee told me that I should associate with the older Brethren and learn from their experiences. I followed that counsel.

From Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

*Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time;*

*Footprints, that perhaps another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,  
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,  
Seeing, shall take heart again.<sup>1</sup>*

These “footprints on the sands of time” will always remain visible to help guide you.

When I was a young member of the Quorum of the Twelve, we walked from our weekly temple meetings back to our offices. I would linger behind and walk with Elder LeGrand Richards. He had been somewhat crippled in an accident in his youth and walked slower than the others.

The other Brethren would say, “You are so kind to take care of Elder Richards,” and I would answer, “You don't know why I do it!”

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As we walked, I listened. He could remember President Wilford Woodruff. He was twelve the last time he heard President Woodruff speak. Elder Richards was a link to that generation. I absorbed every word he spoke.

There is a charge given to the Twelve in the Doctrine and Covenants: “The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world.”<sup>2</sup>

I have had an unquenchable desire to bear testimony of the Father and of Jesus Christ. Christ said, “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”<sup>3</sup> I have yearned to tell what I know about what Christ did and who the Father and the Son are.

I know words carried by the gift of the Holy Ghost can bring to your understanding “the truth of all things.”<sup>4</sup> All truth is worth knowing. Some truths are more useful, but there are truths that are most worth knowing.

### **Experience Helps Us Understand Our Heavenly Father’s Love for His Children**

I have asked young missionaries, “Do you know what the word *father* means?” They say, of course, they do know. I respect their answer, but deep down I think, “You know so very little.” They do know what the word *father* means, but their knowledge is immature.

To you who are married and have a child, the word *father* takes on a new meaning; the word *father* comes into clearer focus.

Perhaps there will come a day when a doctor tells you, “I think you are not going to keep this one.” Finally, you learn about the Father and about yourself.

We had been married for nine years when we first heard those words from the doctor: “I’m afraid you’re not going to keep this one.” As parents, we looked at our tiny baby son and did the only thing we could do. He was named and given a father’s blessing in the hospital.

We prayed, had faith, and said aloud, “Thy will be done.”

Hours passed, and then days. The doctors and nurses continued to work with our son.

At last we heard the words from the doctor, “I believe you *will* keep this one.”

As parents, we grew in understanding and strength and drew closer to each other and to the Father.

Thirteen years later, in a much larger hospital, that experience was repeated with our tenth child. He was given a name and a father’s blessing in the hospital. We prayed, had faith, and once again said aloud, “Thy will be done.”

Hours crept slowly by. Once again we were greatly blessed. He would live. The lessons learned years before had been repeated.

Such experiences will teach you what *father* and *mother* mean. Then you know that you would give your life if that little son could live to experience mortality. You then can begin to understand our Heavenly Father. Then you will truly know what the words *father* and *mother* mean.

Many times I have yearned to relieve the suffering of a child or erase the grief or pain from someone that I love, only to realize that I could not do that. But I have learned that the fact that I would do it if I could is of very great consequence in my relationship to the Lord.

### **Recognize Our Need for a Mediator**

There is a puzzle in the scriptures about justice and mercy. These are two seemingly conflicting principles which I addressed on another occasion by teaching somewhat of a parable.<sup>5</sup> Listen carefully.

There once was a man who wanted something very much. It seemed more important than anything else in his life. In order for him to have his desire, he incurred a great debt.

He had been warned about going into that much debt and particularly about his creditor. But it seemed so important for him to do what he wanted to do and to have what he wanted

right now. He was sure he could pay for it later. So he signed a contract with a lender. He would pay it off sometime along the way. He did not worry too much about it, for the due date seemed such a long time off. He had what he wanted now, and that was what seemed important.

The lender or creditor was always somewhere in the back of his mind, and he made token payments now and again, thinking somehow that the day of reckoning really would never come. But as it always does, the day came, and the contract fell due. The debt had not been paid.

His creditor appeared and demanded payment in full. Only then did he realize that his creditor not only had the power to repossess all that he owned, but the power to cast him into debtor's prison.

"I cannot pay you, for I have not the power to do so," he confessed.

"Then," said the creditor, "we will enforce the contract, take your possessions, and you shall go to prison. You agreed to that. It was your choice. You signed the contract, and now it must be enforced."

"Can you not show mercy? Can you not extend the time or forgive the debt?" the debtor begged. "Arrange some way for me to keep what I have and not go to prison. Will you not be merciful? Surely you believe in mercy?"

The creditor replied, "Mercy is always so one-sided. It would serve only you. If I show mercy to you, it will leave me unpaid. It is justice I demand. Do you believe in justice?"

"I believed in justice when I signed the contract," the debtor said. "It was on my side then, for I thought it would protect me. I did not need mercy then nor think I should ever need it. Justice, I thought, would serve both of us equally well."

"It is justice that demands that you pay the contract or suffer the penalty," the creditor replied. "That is the law. You have agreed to it, and that is the way it must be."

There they were: one meting out justice, the other pleading for mercy. Neither could prevail except at the expense of the other.

"If you do not forgive the debt, there will be no mercy," the debtor pleaded.

"If I do, there will be no justice," was the reply.

Both laws, it seemed, could not be served. Mercy cannot rob justice.<sup>6</sup> Each is an eternal ideal that appears to contradict the other. Is there no way for justice to be fully served and mercy also?

There is a way! The law of justice can be fully satisfied and mercy can be fully extended, but it takes someone else. And so it happened this time.

The debtor had a friend. He came to help. He knew the debtor well. He knew him to be shortsighted. He thought him foolish to have gotten himself into such a predicament. Nevertheless, he wanted to help because he loved him. He stepped between them as a mediator and made this offer to the creditor:

"I will pay the debt if you will free the debtor from his contract so that he may keep his possessions and not go to prison."

As the creditor was pondering the offer, the mediator added, "You demanded justice. Although he cannot pay you, I will do so. You will have been justly dealt with and can ask no more. That would not be just."

The mediator then turned to the debtor. "If I pay your debt, will you accept me as your creditor?"

"Oh, yes," cried the debtor. "You save me from prison and show mercy to me."

"Then," said the mediator, "you will pay the debt to me, and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible. I will provide a way. You need not go to prison."

And so it was that the creditor was paid in full. He had been justly dealt with. No contract had been broken. The debtor, in turn, had been extended mercy. Both laws stood fulfilled. Because there was a mediator, justice

had claimed its full share and mercy was fully satisfied.

Unless there is a mediator, unless we have a friend, the full weight of justice, untempered and unsympathetic, must—positively must—fall on us. The full penalty for every transgression, however minor or however deep, will be exacted from us to the uttermost farthing.

There is a Mediator, a Redeemer who stands both willing and able to appease the demands of justice and extend mercy to those who are penitent, for “he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered.”<sup>7</sup> All will one day stand before Him “to be judged at the last . . . judgment day, according to their works,”<sup>8</sup> “for there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”<sup>9</sup>

Through Him, mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice. The extension of mercy will not be automatic. It will come through covenant with Him. It will be on His terms—His generous terms.

To activate His mercy, we must repent. Our transgressions are all added to our account, and one day, if it is not properly settled, unless we have repented, each of us will be found wanting and stand condemned.

### **Repentance Erases Guilt and Disappointment**

We all live on spiritual credit. In one way or another, the account builds and builds. If you pay it off as you go, you have little need to worry. Soon you begin to learn discipline and know that there is a day of reckoning ahead. Learn to keep your spiritual account paid off at regular intervals rather than allowing it to collect interest and penalties.

Because you are being tested, it is expected that you will make some mistakes. I assume that you have done things in your life that you regret, things that you cannot even apologize

for, much less correct; therefore, you carry a burden. It is time now to use the word *guilt*, which can stain like indelible ink and cannot easily be washed away. A stepchild of guilt is disappointment, regret for lost blessings and opportunities.

If you are struggling with guilt, you are not unlike the people of the Book of Mormon of whom the prophet said, “Because of their iniquity the church had begun to dwindle; and they began to disbelieve in the spirit of prophecy and in the spirit of revelation; and the judgments of God did stare them in the face.”<sup>10</sup>

We often try to solve the problem of guilt by telling one another and telling ourselves that it does not matter. But somehow, deep inside, we do not believe this. Nor do we believe ourselves if we say it. We know better. It does matter!

Prophets have always taught repentance. Alma said, “Behold, he cometh to redeem those who will be baptized unto repentance, through faith on his name.”<sup>11</sup>

Alma bluntly told his wayward son, “Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness.”<sup>12</sup>

There are two basic purposes for mortal life. The first is to receive a body which can, if we will, be purified and exalted and live forever. The second purpose is to be tested. In testing, we certainly will make mistakes. But if we will, we can learn from our mistakes. “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”<sup>13</sup>

You, perhaps, may feel inferior in mind and body and are troubled or burdened with the weight of some spiritual account that is marked “past due.” When you come face to face with yourself in those moments of quiet contemplation (which many of us try to avoid), are there some unsettled things that bother you? Do you have something on your conscience? Are you still, to one degree or another, guilty of anything small or large?

Too frequently we receive letters from those who have made tragic mistakes and are burdened. They beg: "Can I ever be forgiven? Can I ever change?" The answer is yes!

Paul taught the Corinthians, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."<sup>14</sup>

The gospel teaches us that relief from torment and guilt can be earned through repentance. Save for those few—those very few—who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense small or large which is exempt from the promise of complete forgiveness. No matter what has happened in your life, the Lord has prepared a way for you to come back if you will heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Some are filled with a compelling urge, a temptation that recycles in the mind, perhaps to become a habit, then an addiction. We are prone to some transgression and sin and also a rationalization that we have no guilt because we were born that way. We become trapped, and hence comes the pain and torment that only the Savior can heal. You have the power to stop and to be redeemed.

### **Satan Attacks the Family**

President Marion G. Romney told me once, "Don't just tell them so that they can understand, tell them so that they cannot misunderstand."

Nephi said: "For my soul delighteth in plainness; for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding."<sup>15</sup>

So listen up! I will speak plainly as one called and under obligation to do so.

You know that there is an adversary. The scriptures define him in these terms: "That

old serpent, who is the devil, . . . the father of all lies."<sup>16</sup> He was cast out in the beginning<sup>17</sup> and denied a mortal body. He has now sworn to disrupt "the great plan of happiness"<sup>18</sup> and become an enemy to all righteousness. He focuses his attacks on the family.

You live in a day when the scourge of pornography is sweeping across the world. It is hard to escape it. Pornography is focused on that part of your nature through which you have the power to beget life.

To indulge in pornography leads to difficulties, divorce, disease, and troubles of a dozen kinds. There is no part of it that is innocent. To collect it, view it, or carry it around in any form is akin to keeping a rattlesnake in your backpack. It exposes you to the inevitable spiritual equivalent of the serpent's strike with its injection of deadly venom. One can easily understand, with the world being what it is, that you can almost innocently be exposed to it, to read it, or to view it without realizing the terrible consequences. If that describes you, I warn you to stop it. Stop it now!

The Book of Mormon teaches that all "men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil."<sup>19</sup> That includes you. You know what is right and what is wrong. Be very careful not to cross that line.

Although most mistakes can be confessed privately to the Lord, there are some transgressions that require more than that to bring about forgiveness. If your mistakes have been grievous, see your bishop. Otherwise, ordinary confession, quietly and personally, will do. But remember, that great morning of forgiveness may not come all at once. If at first you stumble, do not give up. Overcoming discouragement is part of the test. Do not give up. And as I have counseled before, once you have confessed and forsaken your sins, do not look back.

The Lord is always there. He is willing to suffer and pay the penalty if you are willing to accept Him as your Redeemer.

### **The Savior's Suffering Was for Our Sins**

As mortals, we may not, indeed cannot, understand fully *how* He fulfilled His atoning sacrifice. But for now the *how* is not as important as the *why* of His suffering. Why did He do it for you, for me, for all of humanity? He did it for the love of God the Father and all mankind. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."<sup>20</sup>

In Gethsemane, Christ went apart from His Apostles to pray. Whatever transpired is beyond our power to know! But we do know that He completed the Atonement. He was willing to take upon Himself the mistakes, the sins and guilt, the doubts and fears of all the world. He suffered for us so that we would not have to suffer. Many mortals have suffered torment and died a painful, terrible death. But His agony surpassed them all.

At my age, I have come to know what physical pain is, and it is no fun! Nobody escapes this life without learning a thing or two about suffering. But the personal torment that I cannot bear is when I have come to know that I have caused another to suffer. It is then that I catch a glimpse of the agony the Savior experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane.

His suffering was different than all others before or since because He took upon Himself all of the penalties that had ever been imposed on the human family. Imagine that! He had no debt to pay. He had committed no wrong. Nevertheless, an accumulation of all of the guilt, the grief and sorrow, the pain and humiliation, all of the mental, emotional, and physical torments known to man—He experienced them all. There has been only One in all the annals of human history who was entirely sinless, qualified to answer for the sins and transgressions of all mankind and survive the pain that accompanied paying for them.

He presented His life and in essence said, "It is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world."<sup>21</sup> He was crucified; He died. They could not take His life from Him. He consented to die.

### **Complete Forgiveness Is Possible**

If you have stumbled or even been lost for a time, if you feel that the adversary now holds you captive, you can move forward with faith and not wander to and fro in the world any longer. There are those who stand ready to guide you back to peace and security. Even the grace of God, as promised in the scriptures, comes "after all we can do."<sup>22</sup> The possibility of this, to me, is the truth most worth knowing.

I promise that the brilliant morning of forgiveness can come. Then "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding"<sup>23</sup> comes into your life once again, something like a sunrise, and you and He "will remember [your] sin no more."<sup>24</sup> How will you know? You will know!<sup>25</sup>

This is what I have come to teach you who are in trouble. He will step in and solve the problem you cannot solve, but you have to pay the price. It does not come without doing that. He is a very kind ruler in the sense that He will always pay the price necessary, but He wants you to do what you should, even if it is painful.

I love the Lord, and I love the Father who sent Him. Our burdens of disappointment, sin, and guilt can be laid before Him, and on His generous terms, each item on the account can be marked "paid in full."

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." That is, Isaiah continued, "if ye be willing and obedient."<sup>26</sup>

### **Come unto Him**

The scripture "learn wisdom in thy youth; yea, learn in thy youth to keep the commandments of God"<sup>27</sup> is an invitation attended by the promise of peace and protection from the adversary. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."<sup>28</sup>

Do not expect that all will go smoothly throughout your life. Even for those who are living as they should, it sometimes will be just the opposite. Meet each of life's challenges with optimism and surety and you will have the peace and faith to sustain you now and in the future.

For those who do not yet have all of the blessings you feel you want and need to have, I firmly believe that no experience or opportunity essential for redemption and salvation will be denied you who live faithfully. Remain worthy; be hopeful, patient, and prayerful. Things have a way of working out. The gift of the Holy Ghost will guide you and direct your actions.

If you are one of those struggling with guilt, disappointment, or depression as a result of mistakes you have made or blessings that have not yet come, listen to the reassuring teachings found in the closing hymn, "Come unto Him,"<sup>29</sup> which the choir will sing at the close of this meeting.

I claim, with my Brethren the Apostles, to be a special witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That witness is reaffirmed each time I feel within myself or in others the cleansing effect of His sacred sacrifice. My witness, and that of my Brethren, is true. We know the Lord. He is no stranger to His prophets, seers, and revelators.

In closing, I know you as the youth of the Church, and I understand that you're not perfect, but you are moving along that road. Have the courage. Know that any person who has a body has power over one who has not.<sup>30</sup> Satan is denied a body; so if ever you are confronted with temptations, know that you outrank all those temptations if you will exercise the agency given to Adam and Eve in the garden and passed on to this very generation.

I invoke a blessing upon you that life will be full and that you can find peace. And if you look forward with hope and desire to do that which the Lord would have you do—that is all

that is expected. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life" (1838), in *The Complete Poetical Works of Longfellow* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1922), 3.
2. D&C 107:23.
3. John 14:7.
4. Moroni 10:5.
5. See Boyd K. Packer, "The Mediator," *Ensign*, May 1977, 54–56; see also "The Message: The Mediator Jesus Christ," *New Era*, April 2011, 2–4; or "The Mediator Jesus Christ," *Liahona*, April 2011, 56–58.
6. See Alma 42:25.
7. 2 Nephi 2:7.
8. Alma 33:22.
9. 1 Timothy 2:5.
10. Helaman 4:23.
11. Alma 9:27.
12. Alma 42:16.
13. 1 John 1:10.
14. 1 Corinthians 10:13.
15. 2 Nephi 31:3.
16. 2 Nephi 2:18.
17. See D&C 29:36–38.
18. Alma 42:8.
19. 2 Nephi 2:5.
20. John 15:13.
21. Mosiah 26:23.
22. 2 Nephi 25:23.
23. Philippians 4:7.
24. Jeremiah 31:34.
25. See Mosiah 4:1–3.
26. Isaiah 1:18–19.
27. Alma 37:35.
28. 1 Timothy 4:12.
29. See "Come unto Jesus," *Hymns*, 2002, no. 117.
30. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), 211, footnote 12.