

**“For He That Is Mighty Hath Done to Me Great Things”**  
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**of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles**

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It is a gratifying experience to be in your presence today. Having reviewed the program of subjects and presenters for these last two days, I am confident that each of you has felt renewed and rewarded by your participation in this conference. I congratulate all who have worked and contributed in any way to make it a positive reality. As we now reach the conclusion, I pray that what I say will add and not detract in any way.

I want to say a strong “amen” to the message we just heard from my wife, Kathy. As you might imagine, this assignment to speak to you has been a subject of discussion between us for many weeks. Neither of us felt equal to the task, so part of our conversation was commiserating with each other and reassuring one another. I really wanted to know what she was going to talk about for inspiration for what I should talk about, and that is what happened. So I hope her thoughts on the scripture “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass”<sup>1</sup> will have found a place in your heart.

As the expectant mother of Jesus, Mary sought comfort and peace in the home of her cousin Elisabeth. Elisabeth greeted her: “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.”<sup>2</sup> Mary responded with a beautiful, inspired psalm that included these words:

“My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour....  
“*For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.*”<sup>3</sup>

I truly believe that by your “small things,” our mighty God will do to you great things.

Let me begin by reminding all of us that one of the truly remarkable realities of existence is the universality of God's love. Our Heavenly Father is mindful of all of His creations, and especially His children. As Jesus taught:

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father[’s notice]....

“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”<sup>4</sup>

What is the significance for us of this love that notes even the fall of a sparrow? Surely it means that God cares about what happens to us and what becomes of us. Not one single human being can ever truthfully claim that he or she is beneath God's notice or beyond His care, ever! It means that God is willing to help us and that He does help us. Repeatedly in the scriptures He and His Beloved Son say, “Fear not,” as in the verse just cited, “Fear ye not...ye are of more value than many sparrows,” or this verse in the Doctrine and Covenants: “Look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.”<sup>5</sup> And the Lord explains why: “Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet.”<sup>6</sup> Or in other words, not only is God willing to help; He has the power to help by His omnipotence and by the merits, mercy, and grace of Christ's Atonement.<sup>7</sup>

So how do the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost help us so that we need not fear, and how do They do it in ways that don't violate the moral agency God gave us to act for ourselves? Let me talk about four kinds of help They offer.

## **I. Commandments**

First, the God who loves us invites us to love Him in return. Actually, He commands us to love Him: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”<sup>8</sup> Putting the first commandment first will bring order to our lives, a divine order. That which truly matters most will occupy center stage in our lives, and that which doesn't matter, doesn't help, or even hurts us will fall away. Things in our lives will sort into proper priority.<sup>9</sup>

God knows that if we love Him above all else, our lives will follow the pattern of the Savior's life. The Savior loved the Father above all and said, “The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”<sup>10</sup> To follow the Savior's pattern is to become His disciple, as He is the Father's disciple, and He will not leave us alone.

God knows that as we keep the commandments, two things happen. First, we will be steering a path in life that will bring peace and joy. We will avoid numerous sorrows and much needless pain, and even when the traumas of mortality come upon us, the sadness will be swallowed up in Christ.<sup>11</sup> We will develop the qualities that lead to accomplishment and happiness and will be building toward the high expectations that our Heavenly Father has for us in eternity. Secondly, by choosing to obey His

commandments—by this exercise of our agency—we allow God to pour out help and blessings upon us. Indeed, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”<sup>12</sup> His commandments are truly a manifestation of His love, and our obedience to them manifests our love for Him.

Some have not understood and have used the love of God as an excuse for not changing, for not growing, for not keeping His commandments. “God loves me just the way I am,” they say, not recognizing that His love demands and deserves their love and loyalty in return. Otherwise, He cannot help them.

## II. Grace

Another way in which this loving Heavenly Father helps us is to provide the means to redeem our mistakes and failures and to overcome even our sins. The Atonement of Jesus Christ, that “great and last sacrifice,”<sup>13</sup> as Amulek called it, “bring[s] about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance. And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice.”<sup>14</sup>

President Russell M. Nelson taught in this last general conference: “Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process. It is the key to happiness and peace of mind... When we choose to repent, we choose to change! We allow the Savior to transform us into the best version of ourselves.”<sup>15</sup>

The grace that Jesus Christ offers the repentant is indeed transformative. I saw this many years ago in a woman I interviewed who had once been excommunicated. Repentance was not easy, but in due course she qualified to be rebaptized. She then sought what is called a restoration of blessings—to have her temple covenants renewed and to have the privilege of entering and serving in the temple once more.

Her husband was not a member of the Church and had been quite negative about the whole process. Actually, he was offended that Church leaders had sat in judgment on his wife. He felt they were out of order, and he couldn’t understand why she would want to have anything to do with them or the Church or why she would go through what he felt were the indignities of repentance. One day she explained it to him in terms he could understand. “I’ve watched you sometimes in your workshop,” she said, “when you are working on an engine. After you have been at it for a while, somewhere in the middle of the project, with parts and tools scattered everywhere, you will stop and organize everything, wipe the grease off all your tools and put them away, sweep the floor clean, turn out the light, and close the door. Then you come back in a few days and start fresh. That is what I am doing with my life,” she told him. “I am putting my life in order,

getting clean, and making a fresh start.” Then he understood. He stopped being critical and gave her his full support.

When I spoke with her, I could see the light in her eyes and the peace in her soul. She radiated goodness and contentment and confidence. She had indeed made a fresh start, and she was transformed by grace. I was sure that the Lord, in fact, remembered her sins no more.<sup>16</sup> By the way, this woman should get credit for a new parable, the “Parable of the Messy Workshop,” or something.

### **III. Truth**

God helps us further by revealing truth—“knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come.”<sup>17</sup> What a precious gift it is to know what is true and what is not, what is reality and what is not, what is good and what is not, and what leads to happiness and what does not. The Savior said that the truth makes us free and that without a knowledge of truth, we become the servants of sin and ignorance.<sup>18</sup>

Think of what life is like because we know the Father’s plan of salvation, or what it might be like if we didn’t have that knowledge. President Nelson once related this experience: “In one hospital where I worked, a special room was built with padded walls where family members could receive . . . news [of a loved one’s death]. There, some people manifested their grief by banging their heads against those padded walls. How I longed to teach those individuals that death, though difficult for surviving loved ones, is a necessary part of our immortal existence. Death allows us to progress to the next world [see Alma 42:8].”<sup>19</sup>

Kathy mentioned in her remarks that among the simple things that bring to pass great things are prayer and scripture study. Both are sources of revealed truth. God could not have helped us more as it relates to truth or given us any greater gift than scripture. Consider the thoughts in the brief video clip we will play now.

[“Scriptures Legacy” video segments, 5 minutes]

Full video can be found at:

[https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/2014-04-004-scriptures-legacy?lang=eng&\\_r=1](https://www.lds.org/media-library/video/2014-04-004-scriptures-legacy?lang=eng&_r=1)

May I repeat, the wealth of scripture that we have in our hands, far more than has been available in any previous era, bears witness that we have a greater need for constant access to the recorded word of God than did His children of any previous time. Scripture is a source of truth, and it fosters personal revelation. You have probably had the same experience that I have had when pondering a verse. Sometimes new light comes with greater understanding of what I am reading, and at other times a little burst of truth springs forth that is quite unrelated to the words on the page. Either way, being in the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon, puts us in a condition to receive gifts of greater light and knowledge.

President Howard W. Hunter used to encourage us to set goals not for how many chapters or pages we will read in the scriptures each day, but rather how much *time* we will devote to our study each day. Many of us are type-A, task-oriented people who go for quantity—10 pages, get it done! President Hunter was saying that we should focus on the quality of our time in the scriptures. Don't be rushed; take time to pause, ponder, and pray and to record what comes to you. Make it a search for truth, especially the truth you most need to understand now. Of course, if President Nelson tells you to read the entire Book of Mormon within a certain period of time, do it. There is value to committing extra time for a while and getting the broad, cover-to-cover overview. Plus there is great value in heeding a prophet's direction. But in the normal course, an unhurried approach will yield the greatest fruit.

You will remember that in his first address to us as President of the Church, President Nelson spoke at length about prayer and personal revelation. He emphasized the importance of personal revelation as few have. He recommended that we follow the pattern of Joseph Smith in seeking the wisdom we lack. He said:

“Find a quiet place where you can regularly go. Humble yourself before God. Pour out your heart to your Heavenly Father. Turn to Him for answers and for comfort.

“Pray in the name of Jesus Christ about your concerns, your fears, your weaknesses—yes, the very longings of your heart. And then listen! Write the thoughts that come to your mind. Record your feelings and follow through with actions that you are prompted to take. As you repeat this process day after day, month after month, year after year, you will ‘grow into the principle of revelation’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 132].”<sup>20</sup>

President Nelson added:

“Nothing opens the heavens quite like the combination of increased purity, exact obedience, earnest seeking, daily feasting on the words of Christ in the Book of Mormon [see 2 Nephi 32:3], and regular time committed to temple and family history work.”<sup>21</sup>

Truth is one of God's greatest helps, but we must be ever prepared to defend it. Peter warns us: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom *the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*”<sup>22</sup> Do you not see that happening? Have you given some thought to what your role in defending truth might be?

#### **IV. Gifts**

A fourth endowment of help from a loving, divine Father are the gifts He generously bestows upon us. In general conference some years ago, I spoke about the moral force of women. I stated then, and I believe even more firmly today that “women bring with them into the world a certain virtue, a divine gift that makes them adept at instilling such qualities as faith, courage, empathy, and refinement in relationships and in cultures. When praising the ‘unfeigned faith’ he found in Timothy, Paul noted that this faith ‘dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice’ [2 Timothy 1:5]... Your intuition is to do good and to be good, and as you follow the Holy Spirit, your moral authority and influence will grow.”<sup>23</sup>

The gift of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter and Spirit of Truth, is of incalculable worth and help to each of us. I would call it the essential gift. But those who receive the gift of the Holy Ghost also receive one or more spiritual gifts. Joseph Smith taught, “We... believe in prophecy, in tongues, in visions, and in revelations, in gifts, and in healings; and that these things cannot be enjoyed without the gift of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>24</sup> The Lord stated that spiritual gifts “are given for the benefit of those who love me and keep all my commandments, and him [or her] that seeketh so to do.”<sup>25</sup> I trust that those two categories, especially the second one, cover all of us in attendance today.

Amasa Potter, an early Latter-day Saint, recalled: “I remember the Prophet arising to preach to a large congregation in the grove west of the Temple in Nauvoo. He stated that he would preach on spiritual gifts.... Joseph stated that every Latter-day Saint had a gift, and by living a righteous life, and asking for it, the Holy Spirit would reveal it to him or her.”<sup>26</sup>

Whatever your gift or gifts may be, remember that you are responsible to cultivate them. Elder Neil L. Andersen has a gift for languages, but he does not assume the Lord will give him fluency in a language without his effort. “Once when [his wife] Kathy commented on the countless hours Neil devoted to learning languages, he expressed that he had been given a spiritual gift and that the Lord expected him to labor diligently to realize that gift.”<sup>27</sup>

#### **V. Conclusion: Personal Responsibility**

An important underlying element of my wife’s message is the need for each of us to accept personal responsibility for our life. Our Heavenly Father is not a “helicopter parent.” He does not generally intervene to protect us from the consequences of our choices. If He routinely acted in that way, our cherished moral agency would become meaningless. We would be turning over to Him or someone else responsibility for our lives. That is what Satan has always wanted, but our Heavenly Father wants us to learn how to act independently and choose well.

While He does not clear our paths of all obstacles or automatically erase the consequences of our acts or failures to act, God does provide a way for us to recover when we err. When we turn to Him with broken hearts and contrite spirits, His arm of mercy is stretched out still. He is more than willing to help us resolve problems, deal with the consequences of our foolishness or rebellion, or prevail over the injustices and injuries caused by others.

Let me pause here and remind you that because of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, no one can cause you permanent injury, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual. No one can prevent your eventual resurrection with a perfect, glorified, and immortal body. No one is granted power to prevent your exaltation. Only you can forfeit eternal life. True, some atrocious consequences that others cause may endure through mortality, but they cannot go beyond mortality. Others may indeed cause suffering or slow you down for a time, but they can't control what you are and who you will become.

Christ, by His grace, can give you strength to endure what you must and faith to change what in His wisdom should be changed. And if you should perhaps carelessly hurt someone else, Christ can answer your pleas to make good and repair what you cannot. Christ not only forgives sin, but He removes the stain of sin in you. His grace can make you holy. Because of the Savior and His Atonement, you need not remain the victim of anyone or anything. In a coming day, His perfect judgment will set all things right.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

“Nor height, nor depth, *nor any other creature*, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”<sup>28</sup>

One of the things I most appreciate about Kathy is that she does not wait for me in gospel study or in pursuing personal spiritual development. She is happy for me to keep up if I can, but she is not sitting around waiting for me or anyone else to spoon-feed her. That being said, she is most happy to do things with others when that works, including with me, which I appreciate. The point is that each of us is in charge of developing her or his own spiritual strength and stamina.

In His infinite love, our Heavenly Father is willing to help and bless us far more than we generally conceive. I remember President Boyd K. Packer saying to the Twelve from time to time, “Brethren, we live far beneath our privileges.” He was telling us that whether in God’s wisdom it comes here or hereafter, He will give us whatever we really want. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”<sup>29</sup>

We appreciate and love you for who you are, for what you are, and for what you mean in the Lord’s cause. As President Nelson has said, “We, your brethren, need your strength, your conversion, your conviction, your ability to lead, your wisdom, and your voices.”<sup>30</sup> And your seemingly small things do indeed bring to pass great things. As He did with beloved Mary, mother of Christ, my prayer and blessing is that He that is mighty will do to you great things.<sup>31</sup> In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Alma 37:6.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:42.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:46–47, 49; italics added.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 10:29, 31; see also Thomas A. Wayment, *The New Testament: A Translation for Latter-day Saints: A Study Bible* (2019), 24–25 (Matthew 10:29, 31).

<sup>5</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 6:36.

<sup>6</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 6:37.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Nephi 2:8.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 22:37–38.

<sup>9</sup> See Ezra Taft Benson, “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4–6.

<sup>10</sup> John 8:29.

<sup>11</sup> See Alma 31:38.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9.

<sup>13</sup> Alma 34:10.

<sup>14</sup> Alma 34:15–16.

<sup>15</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67.

<sup>16</sup> See Doctrine and Covenants 58:42.

<sup>17</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 93:24.

<sup>18</sup> See John 8:31–36.

<sup>19</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “The Book of Mormon: What Would Your Life Be Like without It?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2017, 62.

<sup>20</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 95.

<sup>21</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” 95.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Peter 2:1–2; italics added.

<sup>23</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “The Moral Force of Women,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 29, 31.

<sup>24</sup> *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 117.

<sup>25</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 46:9.

<sup>26</sup> *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 117.

<sup>27</sup> D. Todd Christofferson, “Elder Neil L. Andersen: Man of Faith,” *Ensign*, Aug. 2009, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Romans 8:35, 38–39; italics added.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 7:7–8; see also Doctrine and Covenants 4:7.

<sup>30</sup> Russell M. Nelson, “A Plea to My Sisters,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 96.

<sup>31</sup> See Luke 1:49.