

Elder Boyd K. Packer

Of the Council of the Twelve

Who has not been touched by the singing of these innocent children? I think of the account in Third Nephi, chapter 17, when the Lord commanded that the little ones should be brought. As they brought them they placed them upon the ground. He commanded that the multitude should give way until all the little ones were there. Then he commanded that the multitude should kneel. He knelt among the little children and prayed.

"Behold your little ones"

The account records:

"... The eye hath never seen, neither hath the ear heard, before, so great and marvelous things as we saw and heard Jesus speak unto the Father;

"And no tongue can speak, neither can there be written by any man, neither can the hearts of men conceive so great and marvelous things as we both saw and heard Jesus speak. . . ."

After the prayer, it is recorded that he wept. And then, "he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

"And when he had done this he wept again;

"And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones." (3 Ne. 17:16-17, 21-23.)

I confess, I am not ashamed to confess, that little children get inside of me very easily. We have a little fellow at home not quite four. All he has to say to turn lights on in me is one word, "Dad." I am indebted to him for some of the help with this assignment today.

Talk to children

"... children are an heritage of the Lord" (Ps. 127:3), and I desire today to talk to little children. Many of them are here in the choir. Others, a great number of them, are listening in. I think the grown-ups won't mind if I don't talk to them.

There is something very important that I want to say to you children. Something I hope you'll always remember. Something you should learn when you are children and things are easy to remember.

Did you know that you lived before you were born on earth? Before you were born to your father and mother you lived in the spirit world.

That is a very important thing to know. It explains many things that otherwise are very difficult to understand. Many people in the world do not know that, but it is the truth.

When you were born into this life you were not created then. Only your physical body was created. You came from somewhere. You left the presence of your Heavenly Father, for it was your time to live upon the earth.

Reasons for mortality

There were two reasons you were to come into this life. First, to receive a mortal body. This is a great blessing. Our Heavenly Father arranged things so that through a very sacred expression of love between your father and mother your body was conceived and began to grow. Then at some time, I don't know just when, your spirit entered into your body and you became a

living person. But it did not all begin with your birth as a little baby.

Your body becomes an instrument of your mind and the foundation of your character. Through life in a mortal body you can learn to control matter, and that will be very important to you through all eternity.

Pretend, my little friends, that my hand represents your spirit. It is alive. It can move by itself. Suppose that this glove represents your mortal body. It cannot move. When the spirit enters into your mortal body, then it can move and act and live. Now you are a person—a spirit with a body, living on the earth.

Death a separation

It was not intended that we stay here forever. Just for a lifetime. Little ones, you are just beginning your lifetime. Your grandparents and great-grandparents are nearly finished with theirs. It wasn't long ago that they were little fellows and little girls just like you are now. But one day they will leave this mortal existence, and so will you.

Someday, because of old age, or perhaps a disease, or an accident, the spirit and the body will be separated. We then say a person has died. Death is a separation. All of this was according to a plan.

Remember my hand represents your spirit and the glove represents your body. While you are alive the spirit inside the body can cause it to work and to act and to live.

When I separate them, the glove, which represents your body, is taken away from your spirit; it cannot move anymore. It just falls down and is dead. But your spirit is still alive.

"A spirit born of God is an immortal thing. When the body dies, the spirit does not die." (First Presidency, *Improvement Era*, March 1912, p. 463.)

It is important that you get in

your mind what death is. Death is a separation.

The part of you that looks out through your eyes and allows you to think and smile and act and to know and to be, that is your spirit and that is eternal. It cannot die.

Do you remember when someone, perhaps a grandmother, died? Remember your parents explained to you that it was just her body lying in the casket, that grandmother had gone to live with Heavenly Father, and that she would be waiting there. You remember having them say that, don't you?

Death is a separation and is according to the plan. If the plan ended there, it would be too bad, because we came to obtain a body and it would be lost.

God's plan

When he made it possible for us to come into this world, our Heavenly Father also made it possible for us to return to him, because he is our Father and he loves us. Do not think that because we are living on this earth, away from him, and because we can't see him, he has forgotten us.

Didn't you notice, when your older brother was away on his mission, or your sister was away at school, how your parents did not stop loving them? Sometimes it seemed to you they loved them more than they did you. At least they would talk about them and sometimes worry about them. They sent help and messages to encourage them. Distance can make love grow stronger.

Little children, our Heavenly Father knew that we would need help. So, in the plan, he provided for someone to come into the world and help us.

This was Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is a spirit child as all of us are; but also, Jesus was his Only

Begotten Son on the earth. I speak very reverently of him. And he it was, my little friends, who made it possible for us to overcome death and get things put back the way they should be.

You are learning about him in Sunday School, in Primary, and in family home evening. It is very important that you remember him and learn all you can about what he did.

He overcame the mortal death for us. Through the atonement, he made it possible for our spirit and body to be one again. Because of him we will be resurrected. He made it possible for us to be resurrected, for the spirit and the body to be put back together. That is what the resurrection is. That is a gift from him. And all men will receive it. That is why he is called our Savior, our Redeemer.

Learning good from evil

The second reason you came here was to be tested: something like going away to school to learn good from evil. It is very important for us to be able to know the right from the wrong.

It is important for us to know that there is an evil one who will tempt you to do wrong. Because of this, there is another separation you should know about. Even when you are very young you should know about it. There is another separation that you need to think about—not the separation of the body from the spirit; rather, a separation from our Heavenly Father.

If we remain separated from him and can't get back to his presence, then it would be as though we were spiritually dead. And that would not be good. This separation is like a second death, a spiritual death.

You are now learning to read, and you can begin to read the scrip-

tures: the Bible, especially the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. From them we know that little children can learn spiritual truths. For the prophet said:

“. . . he imparteth his word by angels unto men, yea, not only men but women also. Now this is not all; little children do have words given unto them many times which confound the wise and the learned.” (Al. 32:23.)

Importance of cleanliness

In the scriptures we learn that our spirits must be clean, in order to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father:

“. . . there cannot any unclean thing enter into the kingdom of God. . . .” (1 Ne. 15:34.)

Two important things must happen to us then. First, somehow we must get our body back after we die—that is, we want to be resurrected; and we must find a way to keep ourselves clean, spiritually clean, so that we will not be separated from our Heavenly Father and may return to where he is when we leave this earth life.

We are sure you will overcome mortal death. You will be resurrected because of what Christ did for us. Whether or not you overcome the spiritual death—that separation from the presence of our Heavenly Father—will depend a great deal upon you.

When Jesus Christ was living on the earth, he taught his gospel and organized his church. If we live the gospel, we will remain spiritually clean. Even when we make mistakes, there is a way to become clean again. That is what repentance is.

Steps to enter church

To enter his church we must have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must repent, and we must be baptized.

Baptism is like being buried in the water. When we come out of the water, it is like being born again, and we are clean. We receive a remission of our sins. That means they are taken away. We can retain this remission of our sins if we will.

We are then confirmed members of his church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We may have the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide us. That is like receiving messages from our heavenly home, to show us the way to go.

The Lord called prophets and apostles to lead his church. He has always revealed his will through his prophets.

An apostle of the Lord

Let me tell you something I learned when I was about your age. I think I was about six or seven years old. My brother and I (we were about the same age) walked to the stake conference together. I can still go in that building in Brigham City and go back just under the balcony, and say, "I was sitting about there when it happened."

What was it that happened? There was a man speaking at the pulpit, Elder George Albert Smith. He was a member of the Council of the Twelve at that time. I do not remember what he said, whether he was talking about the Word of Wisdom, or about repentance, or about baptism. But somehow while he was speaking it was fixed in my little-boy mind that there stood a servant of the Lord. I have never lost that testimony or that feeling. In my mind I came to know that he was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My little friends, although I sit now in the Council of the Twelve, I have never lost that feeling about these men. Often when we meet in the Council, I look around the cir-

cle and know again that these are the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth. They are special witnesses of him.

A time of testing

Little ones, you will be tested, perhaps more than any generation that ever lived here. You will meet many people who do not believe in Christ. Some will be agents for the evil one and teach wickedness. Sometimes this will be very tempting. There will be times when you will make mistakes (and all of us make mistakes). There will be times when you will wonder if you can live the way he taught we should live. When you are tested, when you are disappointed, or ashamed, or when you are sad, remember him and pray to your Heavenly Father in his name.

Some men will say that he did not come to earth. But he did. Some will say that he is not the Son of God. But he is. Some will say that he has no servants upon the face of the earth. But he has. For he lives. I know that he lives. In his church there are many thousands who can bear witness of him, and I bear witness of him, and tell you again the things you should remember, things you should learn when you are yet a little one.

Remember that each of you is a child of our Heavenly Father. That is why we call him our Father.

You lived before you came to this earth. You came to receive a mortal body and to be tested.

Redemption of Christ

When your life is over, your spirit and body will be separated. We call that death.

Our Heavenly Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us. Because of what he has done we will be resurrected.

There is another kind of

death you should think of. That is the separation from the presence of our Heavenly Father. If we will be baptized and live his gospel, we may be redeemed from this second death.

Our Heavenly Father loves us, and we have a Lord and Savior.

I thank God for a church where you, our little children, are precious above all things. I thank God for our Savior who suffered the little children to come unto him.

You sang these words, just a few minutes ago:

"I think when I read that sweet story
of old,

When Jesus was here among men,
How he called little children like
lambs to his fold,
I should like to have been with him
then.

"I wish that his hands had been
placed on my head,
That his arms had been thrown
around me,
That I might have seen his kind look
when he said,

'Let the little ones come unto me.'"
—*Sing with Me*, no. B-69

My little brothers and sisters, my little children, I know that God lives. I know something of how it feels to have his hand put upon you, to call you to his service. I bear witness and share with you the witness that has been given me, that special witness. He is the Christ! He loves us! I pray for you, our little ones, and plead with him to behold our little ones and to bless them, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President Harold B. Lee

Isn't it wonderful that we have a father and a grandfather in the Council who knows how to talk to little children? Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve has just addressed us.

We shall now hear from Elder David B. Haight, Assistant to the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Elder Hartman Rector, Jr., of the First Council of Seventy.

Elder David B. Haight

Assistant to the Council of the Twelve

In the brief period that I occupy this pulpit, I pray that my remarks may be in harmony with the spirit of this conference. I acknowledge the divinity of the direction the Church is receiving from President Harold B. Lee, our prophet, and the strength and wisdom of President Tanner and President Romney and all of the other General Authorities as they assist in guiding and encouraging the Church membership throughout the world to live lives that are compatible with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have all been greatly touched by these beautiful voices of the Primary children, and I hope to direct my remarks to those who have a great responsibility regarding these precious lives.

Scale of values

As I view the struggles of mankind in this challenging time, I reflect on the familiar phrase of Henry Van Dyke, which most high school students were required at one time to memorize. Van Dyke wrote: