

President Ezra Taft Benson

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we need to place unreserved confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we accept as the Son of God. Until the world accepts Him as the Savior of mankind, lives His teachings, and looks to Him as the *Way*, the *Truth*, and the *Life* in all phases of our lives, we shall continue in our anxiety about the future and our ability to cope with the challenges that mortality brings to each of us.

The fundamental principle of our religion is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why is it expedient that we center our confidence, our hope, and our trust in one solitary figure? Why is faith in Him so necessary to peace of mind in this life and hope in the world to come?

Hope, confidence, and strength to overcome

Our answers to these questions determine whether we face the future with courage, hope, and optimism or with apprehension, anxiety, and pessimism.

My message and testimony is this: Only Jesus Christ is uniquely qualified to provide that hope, that confidence, and that strength to overcome the world and rise above our human failings. To do that, we must place our faith in Him and live by His laws and teachings.

Why faith in Jesus Christ?

The Lord God Omnipotent

Jesus Christ was and is the *Lord God Omnipotent*. (See Mosiah 3:5.) He was chosen before He was born. He was the all-powerful Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the source of life and light to all things.

His word is the law by which all things are governed in the universe. All things created and made by Him are subject to His infinite power.

Son of God

Jesus Christ is the *Son of God*.

He came to this earth at a fore-appointed time through a royal birth-right that preserved His godhood. Combined in His nature were the human attributes of His mortal mother and the divine attributes and powers of His Eternal Father.

His unique heredity made Him heir to the honored title—the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh. As the Son of God, He inherited powers and intelligence which no human ever had before or since. He was literally Immanuel, which means “God with us.” (See Matthew 1:23.)

Even though He was God’s Son sent to earth, the divine plan of the Father required that Jesus be subjected to all the difficulties and tribulations of mortality. Thus He became subject to “temptations, . . . hunger, thirst, and fatigue” (Mosiah 3:7).

The Redeemer

To qualify as the *Redeemer* of all our Father’s children, Jesus had to be perfectly obedient to all the laws of God. Because He subjected Himself to the will of the Father, He grew “from grace to grace, until he received a fulness” of the Father’s power. Thus He had “all power, both in heaven and on earth” (D&C 93:13, 17).

Once this truth about the One we worship as the Son of God is understood, we can more readily comprehend how He had power to heal the sick, cure all manner of diseases, raise the dead, and command the elements. Even devils, whom He cast out, were subject to Him and acknowledged His divinity.

The great Lawgiver

As the great *Lawgiver*, He gave laws and commandments for the bene-

fit of all our Heavenly Father's children. Indeed, His law fulfilled all previous covenants with the house of Israel. Said He:

"Behold, I am the law, and the light. Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life" (3 Nephi 15:9).

His law required all mankind, regardless of station in life, to repent and be baptized in His name and receive the Holy Ghost as the sanctifying power to cleanse themselves from sin. Compliance with these laws and ordinances will enable each individual to stand guiltless before Him at the day of judgment. Those who so comply are likened to one who builds his house on a firm foundation so that even "the gates of hell shall not prevail against them" (3 Nephi 11:39).

The Rock of our salvation

Appropriately we praise Him as the *Rock of our salvation*. (See 2 Nephi 4:30).

To have any measure of appreciation and gratitude for what He accomplished in our behalf, we must remember these vital truths:

Jesus came to earth to do our Father's will.

He came with a foreknowledge that He would bear the burden of the sins of us all.

He knew that He would be lifted up on the cross.

He was born to be the Savior and Redeemer of all mankind.

Only He was able and willing to redeem

He was *able* to accomplish His mission because He was the Son of God and He possessed the power of God.

He was *willing* to accomplish His mission because He loves us.

No mortal being had the power or capability to redeem all other mortals from their lost and fallen condition, nor could any other voluntarily forfeit his

life and thereby bring to pass a universal resurrection for all other mortals.

Only Jesus Christ was able and willing to accomplish such a redeeming act of love.

We may never understand nor comprehend in mortality *how* He accomplished what He did, but we must not fail to understand *why* He did what He did.

Everything He did was prompted by His unselfish, infinite love for us. Hear His own words:

"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; . . .

"Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:16, 18).

As was so characteristic of His entire mortal experience, the Savior submitted to our Father's will and took the bitter cup and drank.

He suffered the pains of all men in Gethsemane so they would not have to suffer if they would repent.

He submitted Himself to humiliation and insults from His enemies without complaint or retaliation.

And, finally, He endured the flogging and brutal shame of the cross. Only then did He voluntarily submit to death. In His words:

"No man taketh it [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18).

The Resurrection and the Life

He is the *Resurrection* and the *Life*. (See John 11:25.)

This power to revive His own life was possible because Jesus Christ was God—even the Son of God. Because He had the power to overcome death, all mankind will be resurrected.

"Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

How we reverence His name—yes, even the hallowed titles that represent His deeds!

Great Exemplar

He is our *Great Exemplar*.

He was perfectly obedient to our Heavenly Father and showed us how to forsake the world and keep our priorities in perspective.

Because of His love for us, He showed us how to rise above petty weaknesses and to demonstrate affection, love, and charity in our relationships with others.

The Bread of Life

He is the *Bread of Life*. (See John 6:35.)

By fasting, prayer, and service to others, He showed that "man shall not live by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4) but must be nourished by the word of God.

He was "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), and so He is able to help them that are tempted (see Hebrews 2:18).

Prince of Peace

He is the *Prince of Peace*—the ultimate *Comforter*. (See Isaiah 9:6.)

As such He has power to comfort an anguished heart pierced by sorrow or sin. He provides a special kind of peace that no human agency can provide:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The Good Shepherd

He is the *Good Shepherd*. (See John 10:11.)

He possesses all the attributes of the divine nature of God. He is virtuous, patient, kind, long-suffering,

gentle, meek, and charitable. If we are weak or deficient in any of these qualities, He stands willing to strengthen and compensate.

Wonderful Counselor

He is a *Wonderful Counselor*. (See Isaiah 9:6.)

Indeed there is no human condition—be it suffering, incapacity, inadequacy, mental deficiency, or sin—which He cannot comprehend or for which His love will not reach out to the individual.

He pleads today:

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Advocate, Mediator, Judge

He is our *Advocate, Mediator, and Judge*.

Because He is God, He is perfectly equitable with justice and mercy. He can simultaneously plead our cause and judge our destiny.

Faith in Him is more than mere acknowledgment that He lives. It is more than professing belief.

Faith in Jesus Christ consists of complete reliance on Him. As God, He has infinite power, intelligence, and love. There is no human problem beyond His capacity to solve. Because He descended below all things (see D&C 122:8), He knows how to help us rise above our daily difficulties.

Faith in Him means believing that even though we do not understand all things, He does. We, therefore, must look to Him "in every thought; doubt not, fear not" (D&C 6:36.)

Faith in Him means trusting that He has all power over all men and all nations. There is no evil which He cannot arrest. All things are in His hands. This earth is His rightful dominion. Yet He permits evil so that we can make choices between good and evil.

"Love the Lord . . . and thy neighbor"

His gospel is the perfect prescription for all human problems and social ills.

But His gospel is only effective as it is applied in our lives. Therefore, we must "feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do" (2 Nephi 32:3).

Unless we *do* His teachings, we do not demonstrate faith in Him.

Think what a different world this would be if all mankind would do as He said: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . .

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37, 39).

The perfect example

What then is the answer to the question "What is to be done?" concerning the problems and dilemmas that individuals, communities, and nations face today? Here is His simple prescription:

"Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has *all* wisdom, and *all* power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.

". . . Believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things *see that ye do them*" (Mosiah 4:9-10; italics added).

As members of the Church, we are "under obligation to make the sinless

Son of Man [our] ideal—the one perfect being who ever walked the earth.

"Sublimest Example of Nobility

"God-like in nature

"Perfect in his love

"Our Redeemer

"Our Savior

"The immaculate Son of our Eternal Father

"The Light, the Life, the Way"

(David O. McKay, *Improvement Era*, June 1951, p. 478).

With all my soul, I love Him.

I humbly testify that He is the same loving, compassionate Lord today as when He walked the dusty roads of Palestine. He is close to His servants on this earth. He cares about and loves each of us today. Of that you can be assured.

He lives today as our Lord, our Master, our Savior, our Redeemer, and our God.

God bless us all to believe Him, to accept Him, to worship Him, and to fully trust in Him, and to follow Him in my humble prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Choir sang "Savior, Redeemer of My Soul" without announcement.

President Hinckley

President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, has just addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "Savior, Redeemer of My Soul."

We shall now be pleased to listen to Elder James E. Faust, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.