

whatsoever He, the Savior, has commanded us (see Matthew 28:20). These thousands of missionaries who have been called by a prophet are visual evidence that our Heavenly Father has not forgotten His children. We bear witness to the world that He lives, that He knows each one of us individually. He has a plan, a divine plan, to bring you and to bring me back into His presence. The Savior has returned to the earth by way of modern-day prophets all of those teachings, all of those ordinances, and His holy priesthood to bring happiness in this life and eternal joy in the life to come—a plan with solutions, a divine plan with guidance to all of the challenges of this life.

Again, the question is asked: “Why do we have more than forty thousand missionaries serving in the world?” Because Heavenly Father loves us. These men and women are His servants! They are His representatives! They come with a message that truly represents what the world needs and wants.

You can know for yourself

You too can know! Yes, you too can know for yourself! For those of you that have already received a witness of the truthfulness of the gospel, I encourage you to cherish that testimony. It is so delicate! It is so fragile! It needs to be nourished with prayer, with the reading of the scriptures, and being at the right place at the right time. I promise you and bear witness that your testimony will grow, and you can have a mighty effect on those with whom you associate.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell

With you, I rejoice in the testimony and talent of these new Brethren.

Now, there are friends of mine here today who are not members. I know you search for the truths which Heavenly Father has given us. You need to know that you are His children, and we invite you to allow the Elder Eddingtons and the Elder Asays of the Church today to teach you how the Church was returned to the earth in these latter days.

Heavenly Father offers to you through His servants a new life. The scriptures call it a rebirth. Not only did the Lord Jesus Christ tell His apostles to “go . . . and teach,” but to baptize them “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

I bear testimony, paraphrasing the words of Peter in his second epistle, that we do not follow cunningly devised fables when we make known unto you the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Peter 2:16).

Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ did return to the earth in 1820. They did restore the priesthood of God and His plan of salvation to a modern-day prophet, Joseph Smith. I know that! I cannot deny what I have felt and what I have seen. I bear this witness to you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard the remarks of Elder Joseph C. Muren of the Seventy. What a timely message for this missionary chorus to hear.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us, and he will be followed by Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Importance of repentance

For some months, I’ve tried to emphasize repentance, one of the most

vital and merciful doctrines of the kingdom. It is too little understood, too little applied by us all, as if it were merely a word on a bumper sticker. Since we have been told clearly by Jesus what manner of men and women we ought to become—even as He is (see 3 Nephi 27:27)—how can we do so except each of us employs repentance as the regular means of personal progression? Personal repentance is part of taking up the cross daily (see Luke 9:23). Without it, clearly there could be no “perfecting of the Saints” (Ephesians 4:12).

Besides, 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. For a brief surging, selfish moment, sin may create the illusion of individuality, but only as in the grunting, galloping Gadarene swine! (see Matthew 8:28–32).

Repentance is a rescuing, not a dour doctrine. It is available to the gross sinner as well as to the already good individual striving for incremental improvement.

Repentance requires both turning away from evil and turning to God (see Deuteronomy 4:30; see also Bible Dictionary, “Repentance”). When “a mighty change” is required, full repentance involves a *180-degree turn*, and without looking back! (see Alma 5:12–13). Initially, this turning reflects progress from telestial to terrestrial behavior, and later on to celestial behavior. As the sins of the telestial world are left behind, the focus falls ever more steadily upon the sins of omission, which often keep us from full consecration.

Real repentance involves not a mechanical checklist but a checkrein of the natural self. Often overlap-

ping and mutually reinforcing, each portion of the process of repentance is essential. This process rests on inner resolve but is much aided by external support.

Recognition of wrong

There can be no repentance without *recognition* of wrong. Whether by provocation, introspection, or wrenching remembrance, denial must be dissolved. As with the prodigal son who finally “came to himself” (Luke 15:17), the first rays of recognition help us begin to see “things as they really are” (Jacob 4:13), including distinguishing between the motes and beams. Recognition is a sacred moment, often accompanied by the hot blush of shame.

Remorse

After recognition, real *remorse* floods the soul. This is a “godly sorrow,” not merely the “sorrow of the world” nor the “sorrowing of the damned” when we can no longer “take happiness in sin” (see 2 Corinthians 7:10; Mormon 2:13). False remorse instead is like fondling our failings. In ritual regret, we mourn our mistakes but without mending them.

There can be no real repentance without personal suffering and the passage of sufficient time for the needed cleansing and turning. This is much more than merely waiting until feelings of remorse subside. Misery, like adversity, can have its special uses. No wonder chastening is often needed until the turning is really under way! (see D&C 1:27; Helaman 12:3).

Real remorse quickly brings forth positive indicators, “fruits meet for repentance” (Matthew 3:8; see also Acts 26:20; Alma 5:54). In process of time, these fruits bud, blossom, and ripen.

Confession

True repentance also includes *confession*: “Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers” (Ezra 10:11). One with a broken heart will not hold back. As confession lets the sickening sin empty out, then the Spirit which withdrew returns to renew.

Support from others is especially crucial now. Hence, we are directed to be part of a caring community in which we all “lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees” (D&C 81:5). Did not the citizens of the unequaled City of Enoch so improve together “in process of time”? (Moses 7:21; see also 7:68–69).

All sins are to be confessed to the Lord, some to a Church official, some to others, and some to all of these. A few may require public confession. Confessing aids forsaking. We cannot expect to sin publicly and extensively and then expect to be rescued privately and quickly, being beaten with only a few stripes (see D&C 42:88–93).

Forsaking of sinning

In real repentance, there is the actual *forsaking* of sinning. “Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin” (Ezekiel 18:30). A suffering Korihor confessed, “I always knew that there was a God” (Alma 30:52), but his turning was still incomplete; hence, “Alma said unto him: If this curse should be taken from thee thou wouldst again lead away the hearts of this people” (Alma 30:55).

Thus, when “a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43).

Genuine support and love from others—not isolation—are needed to sustain this painful forsaking and turning!

Restitution

Restitution is required too.

“Because he hath sinned, . . . he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found” (Leviticus 6:4).

Sometimes, however, restitution is not possible in real terms, such as when one contributed to another’s loss of faith or virtue. Instead, a subsequent example of righteousness provides a compensatory form of restitution.

Repentance is difficult

In this rigorous process, so much clearly depends upon meekness. Pride keeps repentance from even starting or continuing. Some fail because they are more concerned with the preservation of their public image than with having Christ’s image in their countenances! (see Alma 5:14). Pride prefers cheap repentance, paid for with shallow sorrow. Unsurprisingly, seekers after cheap repentance also search for superficial forgiveness instead of real reconciliation. Thus, real repentance goes far beyond simply saying “I’m sorry.”

In the anguishing process of repentance, we may sometimes feel God has deserted us. The reality is that our behavior has isolated us from Him. Thus, while we are turning away from evil but have not yet turned fully to God, we are especially vulnerable. Yet we must not give up but, instead, reach out to God’s awaiting arm of mercy, which is outstretched “all the day long” (Jacob 5:47; 6:4; 2 Nephi 28:32; Mormon 5:11). Unlike us, God has no restrictive office hours.

No part of walking by faith is more difficult than walking the road of repentance. However, with “faith unto repentance,” we can push roadblocks out of the way, moving forward to beg

God for mercy (see Alma 34:16). True contrition brings full capitulation. One simply surrenders, caring only about what God thinks, not what "they" think, while meekly offering, "O God, . . . make thyself known unto me, and I will give away all my sins to know thee" (Alma 22:18). Giving away all our sins is the only way we can come to know God.

In contrast, those who hold back some of their sins will be held back. So will those who refuse to work humbly and honestly with the Lord's appointed. Partial disclosure to appointed leaders brings full accountability. The Prophet Joseph said, "We ought to . . . keep nothing back" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980], p. 7).

We all need repentance

Reflective of our total progression, repentance is not solely for renouncing transgression. For instance, Moses was a righteous and remarkable man. Nevertheless, he needed to change his leadership style for his welfare as well as the people's (see Exodus 18:17-19). Moses succeeded because he was the most meek man upon the face of the earth (see Numbers 12:3). Blessed are the meek, for they are neither easily offended by counsel nor aggravated by admonition. If we were more meek, brothers and sisters, repentance would be much more regular and less staled at.

Our deficiencies of style usually reflect an underdeveloped Christian attribute, as when a chronically poor listener exhibits a lack of love or meekness. You and I are too quick to forgive ourselves in matters of style.

Even when free of major transgression, we can develop self-content-

ment instead of seeking self-improvement. This was once true of Amulek, who later acknowledged, "I was called many times and I would not hear; therefore I knew concerning these things, yet I would not know; therefore I went on rebelling against God" (Alma 10:4-6).

Given the relevancy of repentance as a principle of progress for all, no wonder the Lord has said to His servants multiple times that the thing of greatest worth would be to cry repentance to this generation! (see D&C 6:9; 14:8; 15:6).

Things that impede repentance

Still other things stubbornly impede repentance, such as our not being reprov'd early on when we might have been less proud and more able to recognize our need to change (see D&C 121:43). In such situations, truly "no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142:4).

Or we may be too filled with self-pity, that sludge in which sin sprouts so easily, or too invested in self-reinforcing behavior to turn away from it.

Or we can be too preoccupied with "pleasing . . . the carnal mind" (Alma 30:53), which always insistently asks, "What have you done for me lately?" We can also be too unforgiving, refusing to reclassify others. Yet "he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin" (D&C 64:9). We cannot repent for someone else. But we can forgive someone else, refusing to hold hostage those whom the Lord seeks to set free!

Ironically, some believe the Lord can forgive them, but they refuse to forgive themselves. We are further impeded at times simply because we have not really been taught why and how to repent.

Blessings that follow repentance

As we do repent, however, special assurances await:

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

“All his transgressions . . . shall not be mentioned unto him” (Ezekiel 18:22).

“I, the Lord, remember [their sins] no more”! (D&C 58:42).

Along with all the foregoing reasons for our individual repentance, Church members have a special rendezvous to keep, brothers and sisters. Nephi saw it. One future day, he said, Jesus’ covenant people, “scattered upon all the face of the earth,” will be “armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory” (1 Nephi 14:14). This will happen, but only after more members become more saintly and more consecrated in conduct.

There are some tutoring lines in one of our favorite hymns:

Come unto Jesus, ye heavy laden,
Careworn and fainting, by sin
oppressed.
He’ll safely guide you unto that
haven
Where all who trust him may
rest. . . .

Come unto Jesus; He’ll ever heed
you,
Though in the darkness you’ve
gone astray.

Elder James E. Faust

My brothers and sisters and friends, for some time I have pondered what I might speak about today. I seem to have been led in my thinking by a concern that so many in our generation are missing great blessings by not honoring the Lord’s day.

His love will find you and gently
lead you
From darkest night into day.
[Hymns, no. 117]

Brothers and sisters, we need never mistake local cloud cover for general darkness. The Atoning Light of the world saw to that. It was for our sake that perfectly remarkable Jesus was perfectly consecrated. Jesus let His own will be totally “swallowed up in the will of the Father” (Mosiah 15:7). If you and I would come unto Jesus, we must likewise yield to God, holding nothing back. Then other soaring promises await!

The prophet Mormon declared that Jesus waits “with open arms to receive [us]” (Mormon 6:17), while the unrepentant and the unconsecrated will never know that ultimate joy described by Mormon, who knew whereof he spoke, of being “clasped in the arms of Jesus” (Mormon 5:11).

May God help each of us to so live now in order to merit that marvelous moment then is my prayer for myself—for all of us—in the holy name of the Great Redeemer, even Jesus Christ, amen!

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Sundays as a young boy

I confess that as a young boy, Sunday was not my favorite day. Grandfather shut down the action. We didn’t have any transportation. We couldn’t drive the car. He wouldn’t even let us start the motor. We couldn’t ride the