

At this sacred season of the year, filled with the promise of renewing life, may we be more devoted and disciplined followers of Christ. May we cherish him in our thoughts and speak his name with love. May we kneel before him with meekness and mercy. May we bless and serve others that they may do the same.

Jesus, our only joy be thou,
As thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now,
And thru eternity.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Rex D. Pinegar

On behalf of the Presidency of the Seventy, we welcome with joy Brother Todd Christofferson and Brother Neil Andersen to the ranks of the Seventy. We look forward to serving with you.

The miraculous power of prayer

There have been many inspiring messages given from this Tabernacle pulpit about prayer. Today I add my testimony of the blessing of peace that comes through the miraculous power of prayer.

Alexandre Dumas, in his classic tale *The Count of Monte Cristo*, wrote, "For the happy man prayer is only a jumble of words, until the day when sorrow comes to explain to him the sublime language by means of which he speaks to God" (trans. Lowell Bair [New York: Bantam Books, 1981], p. 34).

Prayers after a fireworks accident

It was a happy, carefree time in my young life until on such a day, sorrow and tragedy brought me closer to God in humble, sincere prayer. In the summer of my thirteenth year, on a July night, I eagerly joined some neighborhood friends to light fireworks. Five of us took turns igniting a colorful assortment of Roman

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Hunter, for that beautiful testimony.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Elder Rex D. Pinegar, a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

candles and rockets and firecrackers. Each was a new surprise with its burst of sights and sounds through the evening sky.

Not all of our fireworks worked as they should have. Most, in fact, were what we called duds. They sputtered momentarily and then died. We set the duds aside until we had tried to light all of the fireworks. We had so many defective ones remaining, we wondered what to do. We couldn't just throw them away. What if we emptied the powder from all of them into the cardboard box? We could toss in a match and have one gigantic blast!

Fortunately for us, our idea failed—at first. The match was tossed; we quickly ran away and waited. Nothing happened. Pressing our luck, we tried a second time, using a makeshift fuse of rolled-up newspaper. Again we anxiously waited at a distance. Again, to our good, nothing happened. That is when we should have quit. Foolishly we gave it one more try; this time my friend Mark and I huddled around the box to keep the flame from being extinguished by the evening breeze.

Then it happened! The gigantic blast we thought we wanted exploded with fury into our faces. The force of the explosion knocked us off our feet, and flames from the ignited powder burned us severely. It

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was a tragic scene. Responding quickly to the screams and cries of the injured youth in her driveway, our friend's mother gathered us into her home. "First we will pray," she said, "and then we will call the doctor."

That was the first of many prayers I remember being offered for us. Soon after, I felt my face, hands, and arms being wrapped in bandages. I heard the voices of my father and my doctor administering a priesthood blessing to me. I heard my mother's voice many times, pleading with Heavenly Father to please let her son see again.

I had been taught very early in my life to pray. Mother and Father had made prayer an important part of our family life. Not until that day, however, did it become so meaningful to me. In those frightening moments I found peace and comfort through prayer.

Prayer brings peace

Recently in his own pain and suffering, my friend and associate Elder Clinton Cutler said of his experience, "The Lord's peace comes not without pain, but in the midst of pain."

Our Father in Heaven has promised us peace in times of trial and has provided a way for us to come to Him in our need. He has given us the privilege and power of prayer. He has told us to pray always and has promised that He will pour out His Spirit upon us (see D&C 19:38).

Thankfully we can call upon Him anytime, anywhere. We can speak to Him in the quiet thoughts of our minds and from the deepest feelings of our hearts. It has been said that "prayer is made up of heart throbs and the righteous yearnings of the soul" (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1916], p. 238). Our Heavenly Father has told us He knows our thoughts and the intents of our hearts (see D&C 6:16).

President Marion G. Romney taught: "Sometimes the Lord puts thoughts in our

minds in answer to prayers. . . . [He] gives us peace in our minds" (in Conference Report, Taiwan Area Conference 1975, p. 7).

For example, in response to Oliver Cowdery's prayer to know if the translation of the plates by Joseph Smith was true, the Lord answered: "Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God?" (D&C 6:23).

The peace God speaks to our minds will let us know when decisions we have made are right, when our course is true. It can come as personal inspiration and guidance to assist us in our daily life—in our homes, in our work. It can provide us with courage and hope to meet the challenges of life. The miracle of prayer, to me, is that in the private, quiet chambers of our minds and hearts, God both hears and answers prayers.

Perhaps the greatest test of our faith and the most difficult part of prayer may be to recognize the answer that comes to us in a thought or a feeling, and then to accept or act on the answer God chooses to give. Consistency in prayer, along with searching the scriptures and following the counsel of living prophets, keeps us in tune with the Lord and enables us to interpret the promptings of the Spirit more easily. The Lord has said, "Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me" (D&C 19:23).

Prayer brings strength to endure

A few days ago I attended the funeral of a lifelong friend, Ralph Poulsen. He was a righteous man of accomplishment and integrity, yet he had to endure the pain and sorrow inflicted upon him by the consequences of a cruel disease. His dear wife, Joyce, suffered also as she was by his side through his agony and pain. As the days and years of suffering went on, she arrived at a time when she felt she could not handle another day. She had done all she could for him. Now a

strength beyond her own was needed. In the depth of her sorrow she pleaded more fervently to God for His help. With the morning came a blessed peace that filled her whole soul—a peace that has continued with her to this day.

There is terrible suffering in our world today. Tragic things happen to good people. God does not cause them, nor does He always prevent them. He does, however, strengthen us and bless us with His peace through earnest prayer.

"It is not the usual purpose of prayer to serve us like Aladdin's lamp, to bring us ease without effort," Elder Richard L. Evans wrote. "Prayer is not a matter of asking only. It should not be always as the beggar's upturned hand. Often the purpose of prayer is to give us strength to do what needs to be done, wisdom to see the way to solve our own problems, and ability to do our best in our tasks.

"We need to pray . . . for strength to endure, for faith and fortitude to face what sometimes must be faced" (in Richard L. Evans, Jr., *Richard L. Evans: The Man and the Message* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973], p. 289).

Finding peace when we receive answers we don't want

It was the Lord Himself who taught us by His own example how to find peace when the answers we receive are not what we asked for. On the eve of His crucifixion, with "soul . . . exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Jesus knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed to the Father, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible [and he acknowledged 'all things are possible unto thee'], let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:38–39; see also Mark 14:36).

We can only try to imagine the anguish the Savior felt when we read in the Gospels that He was "sore amazed [and] very heavy," that He "fell on his face" and prayed not once but a second time and then a third (Mark 14:33; Matthew

26:39, 42, 44): "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

We cannot imagine the anguish of a loving Father, who, knowing what had to be done, accepted His Beloved Son's willingness to suffer for all mankind. In this agony Christ was not left alone. As if the Father were saying, "I cannot take it from you, but I can and will send you strength and peace," "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43).

If we, like the Savior, have the faith to put our trust in our Father in Heaven, to submit to His will, the true spirit of peace will come as a witness and strength that He *has* heard and answered our prayers.

If we resist the inspiration of God and turn from His promptings, we are left to our own confusion and lack of peace.

Sometimes, when our prayers are not answered as we desire, we may feel that the Lord has rejected us or that our prayer was in vain. We may begin to doubt our worthiness before God or even the reality and power of prayer. That is when we must continue to pray with patience and faith and to listen for that peace.

Don't forget to pray

Following the incident when I was badly burned, I had felt with a surety that I would be healed. From the moment that first prayer was offered in my friend's home, I felt a comforting peace. While the doctor treated my burns, I hummed a hymn, finding comfort in these words:

When sore trials came upon you,

Did you think to pray? . . .

Oh, how praying rests the weary!

Prayer will change the night to day.

So, when life gets dark and dreary,

Don't forget to pray.

["Did You Think to Pray?" *Hymns*, no. 140]

Each day when the doctor changed my bandages, my mother would ask,

"Can he see?" For many days the answer was the same: "No, not yet." Finally, when all the bandages were permanently removed, my eyesight began to return. I had anticipated that time with anxious expectation. The peace and comfort I had earlier felt gave me assurance that all would be well. However, when my vision cleared enough for me to see my hands and face, I was shocked, unprepared for what I saw. To my terrible disappointment, I found that all was *not* well. Seeing my scarred and disfigured skin brought great fear and doubt into my mind. I can remember thinking, Nothing can help this skin to be healed—not even the Lord.

Gratefully, as my prayers and the prayers of others continued, I felt the gifts of faith and of peace restored, and then, in time, my eyesight and my skin were healed. My friends who were injured were also blessed with complete recovery.

May we always seek to obtain the Lord's miraculous gift of peace through prayer. May we not forget to pray.

I join with Alma in saying, "May the peace of God rest upon you, . . . from this time forth and forever" (Alma 7:27).

With this testimony of peace through prayer, I bear witness of the reality of Jesus Christ and of His Father and of the Holy Ghost, who will lead our lives in the same *miraculous* way through answers to our prayers of faith. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Thank you, Brother Pinegar. Brother Pinegar is a member of the Presidency of the Seventy.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin

Building spiritually strong families

My dear brothers and sisters, my subject today is building homes and families that are spiritually secure.

During a Manitoba Canada stake conference a few years ago, Sister Karen Beaumont described her feelings about the raging winter storms that come to their area. She said:

"I love a winter storm. . . . When the wind starts to blow and the snow begins to fall, a feeling of excitement starts to build. . . . When I can't see the trees at the neighbor's farmyard, . . . I phone my husband! . . . He then picks up the children who are at school. . . . It is hard to describe the feelings I experience as our family is gathered home, and the storm rages outside. . . . And I love it! Everyone is safe; we are together. We have lots of food and water. The longer it lasts, the better. . . . We are shut off from the world.

. . . We bask in the warmth of our home and in the warmth of our love. My heart is full, and I am at peace. Sometimes I wish I could just stay like that forever, with my family gathered around me, protected, shut off from the evil influences of the world. But alas, the storm blows itself out eventually, we dig ourselves out, and off we go to face the world again."

Perhaps all of us sometimes would like to withdraw and isolate ourselves from the storms of life and from the fiery darts of Satan. However, we must be in the world but not of the world, meaning to go forward in the midst of the sin, evil, and corruption that are in the world but resisting and rejecting them. Being in the world can be frightening because we live at a time when Satan is becoming more and more bold. The Lord said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15).