

second counselor. Those in favor may manifest it. Any opposed may so signify.

It is proposed that we sustain Sister Carol Ann Burdett Thomas as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency. All in favor, please signify. Any opposed, by the same sign.

It is proposed that we sustain the other General Authorities and general auxiliary presidencies as presently constituted. Those in favor, please manifest it. Any opposed may manifest it.

It appears that the sustaining has been unanimous in the affirmative.

President Hinckley

Thank you, President Monson. I think he made a pretty good effort at pronouncing those names. I'm not sure he got them all right, but he tried! I want to say further that Sister Sheri Dew's call to the Relief Society presidency isn't a thank-you for writing my biography. She was nominated by Sister Smoot and not by me, although I greatly appreciate what she's done. She's left me without privacy or anything else.

President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Council of the Twelve, will now speak to us.

President Boyd K. Packer

Study of doctrines improves behavior

My message is to our young people. We have great concern for young people who grow up without values on which to base their conduct. I have long believed that the study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than talking about behavior will improve behavior.

The study of behavior is greatly improved when linked to standards and to values. Practical values, useful in everyday life, are found in the scriptures and the doctrines they reveal. I will give you one example: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."¹

You should learn while you are young that while the Atonement of Christ applies to humanity in general, the influence of it is individual, very personal, and very useful. Even to you beginners, an understanding of the Atonement is of immediate and very practical value in everyday life.

Untidy soldiers in World War II

More than 50 years ago during World War II, I had an experience. Our

bomber crew had been trained at Langley Field, Virginia, to use the latest invention—radar. We were ordered to the West Coast and then on to the Pacific.

We were transported on a freight train with boxcars fitted with narrow bedsprings that could be pulled down from the wall at night. There were no dining cars. Instead, camp kitchens were set up in boxcars with dirt floors.

We were dressed in light-colored summer uniforms. The baggage car got sidetracked, so we had no change of clothing during the six-day trip. It was very hot crossing Texas and Arizona. Smoke and cinders from the engine made it very uncomfortable. There was no way to bathe or wash our uniforms. We rolled into Los Angeles one morning—a grubby-looking outfit—and were told to return to the train that evening.

We thought first of food. The 10 of us in our crew pooled our money and headed for the best restaurant we could find.

It was crowded, and so we joined a long line waiting to be seated. I was first, just behind some well-dressed women. Even without turning around, the stately woman in front of me soon became aware that we were there.

She turned and looked at us. Then she turned and looked me over from head to toe. There I stood in that sweaty, dirty, sooty, wrinkled uniform. She said in a tone of disgust, "My, what untidy men!" All eyes turned to us.

No doubt she wished we were not there; I shared her wish. I felt as dirty as I was, uncomfortable, and ashamed.

The shame of being spiritually unclean

Later, when I began a serious study of the scriptures, I noticed references to being spiritually clean. One verse says, "Ye would be more miserable to dwell with a holy and just God, under a consciousness of your filthiness before him, than ye would to dwell with the damned souls in hell."²

I could understand that. I remembered how I felt that day in Los Angeles. I reasoned that to be spiritually unclean would bring shame and humiliation immeasurably more intense than I felt then. I found references—there are at least eight of them—which say that no unclean thing can enter the presence of God.³ While I realized those references had little to do with dirty clothes or soiled hands, I decided I wanted to stay spiritually clean.

Incidentally, that day we went canoeing in Griffith Park. We were horsing around and, of course, tipped over. We got to shore all right, and in due time the sun dried us out. By the time we returned to the train, we were really quite presentable.

I learned that when I didn't live as I ought to, getting myself spiritually clean was not as easy as taking a shower or putting on clean clothing or falling out of a canoe.

Repentance can cleanse us

I learned about the great plan of happiness, that we are on earth to be

tested. We will all make mistakes. The Apostle John taught, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Fortunately he added, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."⁴ I paid particular attention to that word *cleanse*.

I thought that repentance, like soap, should be used frequently. I found that when I apologized for mistakes, things were better. But for serious mistakes, an apology was not enough—sometimes not even possible. While these mistakes were, for the most part, not major ones, the spiritual pain called *guilt* invariably set in. Sooner or later they must be resolved, but I didn't know what to do. That happens when you break something that you alone can't fix.

Wickedness never was happiness

Among you young people are those who are "vexed," as Peter said, "with the filthy conversation of the wicked."⁵ Some of you joke about standards and see no need to change behavior. You tell yourselves it doesn't matter because everybody's doing it.

But that doesn't work because you, by nature, are good. How many times have you heard someone say, after doing some generous or heroic deed or simply helping others, how *good* it made them feel? Like any natural feeling or emotion, that reaction is inborn in you. Surely you have experienced that yourself! Happiness is inseparably connected with decent, clean behavior.

The prophet Alma bluntly told his wayward son that because he transgressed he was "in a state contrary to the nature of happiness"⁶ and that "wickedness never was happiness."⁷ Those who don't know how to erase mistakes often feel cornered and rebellious and lose themselves in unworthy living. If you

travel with transgressors, you will suffer much more than I did in that restaurant.

Through the Atonement we can repent

Most mistakes you can repair yourself, alone, through prayerful repentance. The more serious ones require help. Without help, you are like one who can't or doesn't wash or bathe or put on clean clothes. The path you need to follow is in the scriptures. Read them and your faith in Christ will grow. Listen to those who know the gospel.

You will learn about the Fall of man, about the purpose of life, about good and evil, about temptations and repentance, about how the Spirit works. Read what Alma said of his repentance: "I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more."⁸

Hear the Lord say, "Behold, he who has repented of his sins, the same is forgiven, and I, the Lord, remember them no more."⁹ Doctrine *can* change behavior quicker than talking about behavior will.

It was through reading the scriptures, and listening, that I could understand, at least in part, the power of the Atonement. Can you imagine how I felt when finally I could see that if I followed whatever conditions the Redeemer had set, I need never endure the agony of being spiritually unclean? Imagine the consoling, liberating, exalting feeling that will come to you when you see the reality of the Atonement and the practical everyday value of it to you individually.

You need not know everything before the power of the Atonement will work for you. Have faith in Christ; it begins to work the day you ask! The scripture speaks of "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel."¹⁰ We all pretty well know what it means to obey laws. But how are we to obey ordinances?

Generally we understand that, conditioned upon repentance, the ordinance of

baptism washes our sins away. Some wonder if they were baptized too soon. If only they could be baptized now and have a clean start. But that is not necessary! Through the ordinance of the sacrament, you renew the covenants made at baptism. When you meet all of the conditions of repentance, however difficult, you may be forgiven and your transgressions will trouble your mind no more.

Like Joseph F. Smith, we can be clean

President Joseph F. Smith was six years old when his father, Hyrum, was killed in Carthage Jail. Joseph crossed the plains with his widowed mother. At age 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He felt lost and alone and said: "I was very much oppressed. . . . I was almost naked and entirely friendless, except the friendship of a poor, benighted . . . people. I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look [anyone] in the face."

While pondering his plight, the young elder had a dream, "a literal thing; . . . a reality." He dreamed he was on a journey rushing as fast as he possibly could.

He carried a small bundle. Finally he came to a wonderful mansion, his destination. As he approached, he saw a notice, "Bath." He turned aside quickly, went in, and washed himself clean. He opened his little bundle and found clean, white clothing—"a thing," he said, "I had not seen for a long time." He put them on and rushed to the door of the mansion.

"I knocked," he said, "and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovingly, and the first words he said [were]: 'Joseph, you are late.' . . . I took confidence and said:

"'Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!'"¹¹ And so it can be with you.

Poetic expression of testimony

I say to you again that a knowledge of the principles and doctrines of the gospel will affect your behavior more than talking about behavior.

I have used the Atonement as one of many examples. In the gospel of Jesus Christ are values on which to build a happy life.

I give you my testimony that our Father in Heaven lives. The Atonement of Christ can bless your life. If only I could tell you what the Atonement means to me. I once tried to express it in writing and close with these lines:

In ancient times the cry "Unclean!"
Would warn of lepers near.
"Unclean! Unclean!" the words rang
out;
Then all drew back in fear,
Lest by the touch of lepers' hands
They, too, would lepers be.
There was no cure in ancient times,
Just hopeless agony.

No soap, no balm, no medicine
Could stay disease or pain.
There was no salve, no cleansing bath,
To make them well again.

But there was One, the record shows,
Whose touch could make them pure;
Could ease their awful suffering,
Their rotting flesh restore.

His coming long had been foretold.
Signs would precede His birth.
A Son of God to woman born,
With power to cleanse the earth.

The day He made ten lepers whole,
The day He made them clean,
Well symbolized His ministry
And what His life would mean.

However great that miracle,
This was not why He came.
He came to rescue every soul
From death, from sin, from shame.

For greater miracles, He said,
His servants yet would do,

To rescue every living soul,
Not just heal up the few.

Though we're redeemed from mortal
death,
We still can't enter in
Unless we're clean, cleansed every
whit,
From every mortal sin.

What must be done to make us clean
We cannot do alone.
The law, to be a law, requires
A pure one must atone.

He taught that justice will be stayed
Till mercy's claim be heard
If we repent and are baptized
And live by every word. . . .

If we could only understand
All we have heard and seen,
We'd know there is no greater gift
Than those two words—"Washed
clean!"¹²

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Articles of Faith 1:3.
2. Mormon 9:4.
3. See 1 Nephi 10:21; 15:34; Alma 7:21; 11:37; 40:26; 3 Nephi 27:19; Doctrine and Covenants 94:9; Moses 6:57.
4. 1 John 1:8-9.
5. 2 Peter 2:7.
6. Alma 41:11.
7. Alma 41:10.
8. Alma 36:19.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Hebrews 8:12; 10:17.
10. Articles of Faith 1:3.
11. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 541-42.
12. Boyd K. Packer, "Washed Clean."

President Hinckley

President Boyd K. Packer has just spoken to us.

We're pleased and delighted to have Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve with us this morning. The Lord has blessed him, immensely and