

# Saving Ordinances Will Bring Us Marvelous Light

## April 2018 General Conference

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Of the Seventy

Participating in ordinances and honoring the associated covenants will bring you marvelous light and protection in this ever-darkening world.

Brothers and sisters, I rejoice with you in the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ.

A friend once asked Elder Neil L. Andersen, then of the Seventy, how it felt to speak in front of 21,000 people at the Conference Center. Elder Andersen replied, "It is not the 21,000 people who make you nervous; it is the 15 Brethren seated behind you." I chuckled then, but I feel it now. How I love and sustain these 15 men as prophets, seers, and revelators.

The Lord told Abraham that through his seed and through the priesthood, all the families of the earth would be blessed "with the blessings of the Gospel, ... even of life eternal" (Abraham 2:11; see also verses 2–10).

These promised blessings of the gospel and the priesthood were restored to the earth, and then, in 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith administered the endowment to a limited number of men and women. Mercy Fielding Thompson was one of them. The Prophet said to her, "This [endowment] will bring you out of darkness into marvelous light."<sup>1</sup>

Today I want to focus on saving ordinances, which will bring you and me marvelous light.

## Ordinances and Covenants

In *True to the Faith* we read: "An ordinance is a sacred, formal act performed by the authority of the priesthood. [The] ordinances [that] are essential to our exaltation ... are called saving ordinances. They include baptism, confirmation, ordination to the Melchizedek Priesthood (for men), the temple endowment, and the marriage sealing."<sup>2</sup>

Elder David A. Bednar taught, "The ordinances of salvation and exaltation administered in the Lord's restored Church ... constitute authorized channels through which the blessings and powers of heaven can flow into our individual lives."<sup>3</sup>

Like a coin with two sides, all the saving ordinances are accompanied by covenants with God. God promised us blessings if we faithfully honor those covenants.

The prophet Amulek declared, "This ... is the time ... to prepare to meet God" (Alma 34:32). How do we prepare? By worthily receiving ordinances. We must also, in President Russell M. Nelson's words, "keep on the covenant path." President Nelson continued, "Your commitment to follow the Savior by making covenants with Him and then keeping those covenants will open the door to every spiritual blessing and privilege available to men, women, and children everywhere."<sup>4</sup>

John and Bonnie Newman, like many of you, are recipients of the spiritual blessings President Nelson promised. One Sunday, after attending church with their three young children, Bonnie said to John, who was not a member of the Church, “I cannot do this on my own. You need to decide whether you come to my church with us or you choose a church that we can go to together, but the children need to know that their dad loves God too.” The following Sunday and every Sunday after, John not only attended; he also served, playing the piano for many wards, branches, and Primaries over the years. I had the privilege of meeting with John in April 2015, and in that meeting, we discussed that the best way he could manifest his love for Bonnie was to take her to the temple, but that could not happen unless he was baptized.

After attending The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for 39 years, John was baptized in 2015. A year later, John and Bonnie were sealed in the Memphis Tennessee Temple, 20 years after she had received her own endowment. Their 47-year-old son, Robert, said of his dad, “Dad has really, really blossomed since he received the priesthood.” Bonnie added, “John has always been a happy and cheerful person, but receiving the ordinances and honoring his covenants has enhanced his gentleness.”

## The Atonement of Christ and His Example

Many years ago, President Boyd K. Packer warned, “Good conduct without the ordinances of the gospel will neither redeem nor exalt mankind.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, we not only need the ordinances and covenants to return to our Father, but we also need His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Atonement.

King Benjamin taught that only in and through the name of Christ can salvation come unto the children of men (see Mosiah 3:17; see also Articles of Faith 1:3).

Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ redeemed us from the consequences of the Fall of Adam and made possible our repentance and eventual exaltation. Through His life, He set the example for us to receive saving ordinances, in which “the power of godliness is manifest” (D&C 84:20).

After the Savior received the ordinance of baptism to “fulfil all righteousness” (see 2 Nephi 31:5–6), Satan tempted Him. Likewise, our temptations do not end after baptism or sealing, but receiving the sacred ordinances and honoring the associated covenants fill us with marvelous light and give us strength to resist and overcome temptations.

## Warning

Isaiah prophesied that in the latter days, “the earth also is defiled ... because they have ... changed the ordinance” (Isaiah 24:5; see also D&C 1:15).

A related warning, revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith, was that some “draw near to [the Lord] with their lips, ... [and] they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof” (Joseph Smith—History 1:19).

Paul also warned that many would have “a form of godliness, but [deny] the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5). I repeat, from such turn away.

The many distractions and temptations of life are like “ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). It is the true shepherd who will prepare, protect, and warn the sheep and the flock when these wolves are approaching (see John 10:11–12). As undershepherds who seek to emulate the perfect life of the Good Shepherd, aren’t we shepherds of our own soul as well as of others? With the counsel of prophets, seers, and revelators, whom we just sustained, and with the power and gift of the Holy Ghost, we can see the wolves coming if we are watchful and prepared. In contrast, when we are casual shepherds of our own soul and others’ souls, casualties are likely. Casualness leads to casualties. I invite each of us to be a faithful shepherd.

## Experience and Testimony

The sacrament is an ordinance that helps us stay on the path, and worthily partaking is evidence that we are keeping the covenants associated with all the other ordinances. A few years ago, while my wife, Anita, and I were serving in the Arkansas Little Rock Mission, I went out to teach with two young missionaries. During the lesson, the good brother we were teaching said, “I have been to your church; why do you have to eat bread and drink water every Sunday? In our church, we do it twice a year, on Easter and Christmas, and that is very meaningful.”

We shared with him that we are commanded to “meet together oft to partake of bread and wine” (Moroni 6:6; see also D&C 20:75). We read out loud Matthew 26 and 3 Nephi 18. He responded that he still did not see the necessity.

We then shared the following comparison: “Imagine you are involved in a very serious car accident. You have been injured and are unconscious. Someone runs by, seeing that you are unconscious, and dials the emergency number, 911. You are attended to and regain consciousness.”

We asked this brother, “When you are able to recognize your surroundings, what questions will you have?”

He said, “I will want to know how I got there and who found me. I will want to thank him every day because he saved my life.”

We shared with this good brother how the Savior saved our lives and how we need to thank Him every day, every day, every day!

We then asked, “Knowing that He gave His life for you and us, how often do you want to eat the bread and drink the water as emblems of His body and blood?”

He said, “I get it, I get it. But one more thing. Your church is not lively like ours.”

To that we responded, “What would you do if the Savior Jesus Christ walked through your door?”

He said, “Immediately, I would go down to my knees.”

We asked, “Isn’t that what you feel when you walk into Latter-day Saint chapels—reverence for the Savior?”

He said, “I get it, I get it, I get it!”

He showed up at church that Easter Sunday and kept returning.

I invite each of us to ask ourselves, "What ordinances, including the sacrament, do I need to receive, and what covenants do I need to make, keep, and honor?" I promise that participating in ordinances and honoring the associated covenants will bring you marvelous light and protection in this ever-darkening world. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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