

Have I Truly Been Forgiven?

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The promise of complete and perfect forgiveness is made to everyone—in and through the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Several years ago, Sister Nattress and I moved to Idaho, where we opened a new business. There were long days and nights at the office. Thankfully, we lived just a few blocks away from work. Each week, Shawna and our three daughters—all under the age of six—would come to the office to share lunch together.

On one such day after our family lunch, I noticed that our five-year-old daughter, Michelle, had left me a personal message, written on a Post-it Note and attached to my office telephone.

It simply read, “Dad, remember to love me. Love, Michelle.” This was a powerful reminder to a young father about those things that matter most.

Brothers and sisters, I testify that *our Heavenly Father always remembers us* and that He loves us perfectly. My question is this: Do we remember Him? And do we love Him?

Years ago, I served as a local Church leader. One of our young men, Danny, was outstanding in every way. He was obedient, kind, good, and had a great heart. However, when he graduated from high school, he started to associate with a rough crowd. He got involved in drugs, specifically methamphetamine, and traveled down the slippery slope of addiction and destruction. Before long, his appearance completely changed. He was hardly recognizable. The most significant change was in his eyes—the light in his eyes had dimmed. Several times I reached out to him, but to no avail. He wasn’t interested.

It was difficult to see this incredible young man suffer and live a life that was not him! He was capable of so much more.

Then one day, his miracle began.

He attended a sacrament meeting where his younger brother shared his testimony prior to departing for a mission. During the meeting, Danny

felt something he had not felt for a long time. He felt the love of the Lord. He finally had hope.

Although he had a desire to change, it was difficult for Danny. His addictions and the accompanying guilt were almost more than he could bear.

One particular afternoon, when I was out mowing our lawn, Danny pulled up in his car unannounced. He was struggling terribly. I turned off the mower, and we sat down together in the shade of the front porch. It was then that he shared the feelings of his heart. He truly wanted to come back. However, turning away from his addictions and lifestyle was extremely difficult. Adding to this, he felt so guilty, so ashamed for falling so far. He asked, “Can I really be forgiven? Is there really a way back?”

After he poured out his heart with these concerns, we read Alma chapter 36 together:

“Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities. ...

“Yea, ... the very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror” (verses 13–14).

After those verses, Danny said, “This is exactly how I feel!”

We continued:

“While I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. ...

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold” (verses 17, 20).

As we read these passages, tears began to flow. Alma’s joy was the joy he had been searching for!

We discussed that Alma had been exceptionally wicked. However, once he repented, he never looked back. He became a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ. He became a prophet! Danny’s eyes widened. “A prophet?” he said.

I simply responded, “Yes, a prophet. No pressure on you!”

We discussed that while his sins did not rise to the level of Alma’s, the same promise of complete and perfect forgiveness is made to everyone—in and through the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Danny now understood. He knew what he needed to do: he needed to begin his journey by trusting in the Lord and forgiving himself!

Danny's mighty change of heart was nothing short of a miracle. Over time, his countenance changed, and the brightness in his eyes returned. He became temple worthy! He was finally back!

After several months, I asked Danny if he would like to submit an application to serve a full-time mission. His response was one of shock and awe.

He said, "I would love to serve a mission, but you know where I have been and the things I have done! I thought I was disqualified."

I responded, "You may be right. However, there is nothing precluding us from making a request. If you are excused, at least you will know that you expressed a sincere desire to serve the Lord." His eyes lit up. He was thrilled with this idea. To him this was a long shot, but it was a chance he was willing to take.

A few weeks later, and to his amazement, another miracle occurred. Danny received a call to serve a full-time mission.

A few months after Danny arrived in the mission field, I received a telephone call. His president simply said, "What is it with this young man? He is the most incredible missionary I have ever seen!" You see, this president had received a modern-day Alma the Younger.

Two years later, Danny returned home with honor, having served the Lord with all his heart, might, mind, and strength.

Following his missionary report in sacrament meeting, I returned home, only to hear a knock at the front door. There stood Danny with tears welling in his eyes. He said, "Can we talk for a minute?" We went outside to the same porch step.

He said, "President, do you think I have truly been forgiven?"

Now my tears accompanied his. Before me stood a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ who had given his all to teaching and testifying about the Savior. He was the embodiment of the healing and strengthening power of the Savior's Atonement.

I said, "Danny! Have you looked in the mirror? Have you seen your eyes? They are filled with light, and you are beaming with the Spirit of the Lord. Of course you have been forgiven! You are amazing! Now what you need to do is move forward with your life. Don't look back! Look forward with faith to the next ordinance."

Danny's miracle continues today. He married in the temple and returned to school, where he received a master's degree. He continues to serve the Lord with honor and dignity in his callings. More

important, he has become an incredible husband and a faithful father. He is a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ.

President Russell M. Nelson taught, “Without the [Savior’s] infinite Atonement, all mankind would be irretrievably lost.”¹ Danny wasn’t lost, and neither are we to the Lord. He stands at the door to lift us, to strengthen us, and to forgive us. He always remembers to love us!

An incredible demonstration of the Savior’s love for God’s children is recorded in the Book of Mormon: “When Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them” (3 Nephi 17:5).

The Savior had already spent a full day ministering to the people. Yet He had more to do—He was to visit His other sheep; He was to go to His Father.

Notwithstanding these obligations, He discerned that the people desired for Him to tarry a little longer. Then, with the Savior’s heart full of compassion, one of the greatest miracles in the history of the world occurred:

He stayed.

He blessed them.

He ministered to their children one by one.

He prayed for them; He wept with them.

And He healed them. (See 3 Nephi 17.)

His promise is eternal: He will heal us.

To those who have strayed from the covenant path, please know there is always hope, there is always healing, and there is always a way back.

His eternal message of hope is the healing balm for all who live in a troubled world. The Savior said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Brothers and sisters, let us remember to seek Him, to love Him, and to always remember Him.

I testify that God lives and that He loves us. I further testify that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of the world. He is the mighty healer. I know that my Redeemer lives! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Note

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Prepare for Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 21.

