

If we will but listen to those whose calling it is to watch and warn, if we will heed to the words of the Master Himself, then our spiritual house will stand firm, and we can let the rain descend and the floods come and the winds blow and beat upon our house, because we are founded upon that rock (see Matthew 7:24–25).

The Lord has said, “And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days” (D&C 1:4). He also said, “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

I bear witness that there is a God in heaven, the framer of heaven and earth and all things that in them are. I bear

witness that He has a plan for us, His children. I bear witness that in fulfillment of that plan His Son, Jesus Christ, came to earth to take upon Him the sins of the world and make it possible for us to be freed from the terrible consequences of sin and evil. He is our Savior and Redeemer, and, as it was for Jerusalem, His arms are outstretched toward us. He will be our shield and our protector, and we will have peace in the midst of storm and refuge from the raging wind.

May we ever listen to those whose calling it is to watch and warn, to see and save. May we walk in the ways of the Lord and be preserved in paths of peace, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### Warning about procrastination

All of us have faced deadlines. Fear can grip us when we realize that there may not be enough time left to finish what we promised we would do. The thought comes, “Why didn’t I start earlier?”

The Lord knew we would be tempted to procrastinate the most important preparation we could ever make in this life. More than once He warned us about delay. He taught the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom did not fill their lamps for the coming of the bridegroom. He also gave the parable of the servants who were faithless because they believed their Lord would delay His coming. The results of delay were tragic.

For the five unprepared virgins, it was this:

“Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

“But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not” (Matthew 25:11–12).

For the faithless servants who delayed their preparation, it was this:

“The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,

“And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:50–51).

### The temptation to delay repentance

The temptation to delay repentance comes not only at the end of the world as suggested by those scriptures. That temptation seems to have been nearly constant since the beginning of time and goes on throughout our lives. In youth we may have thought: “There will be time enough to worry about spiritual things just before my mission or before marriage. Spiritual things are for older people.” Then, in the early years of marriage, the pressures of life, of jobs, of bills, of finding a moment for rest and

recreation seem to crowd us so closely that delay in meeting obligations to God and family again seems reasonable. It is easy to think, "Perhaps there will be more time for that in the middle years." But the compression of time does not ease in the years that follow. There is so much to do, and time seems to shrink. The 55th birthday and the 65th and the 75th don't seem to be a decade apart.

With aging comes physical and emotional challenge. We cannot seem to get as much done in an hour as we did in youth. And it is harder to be patient with others, and they seem more demanding. It is tempting then to excuse ourselves yet again from rising to the standards required by our early covenants, now so long neglected.

Not all of us fall into that trap of inaction. But enough people do that we each have at least one person we love and often more—a child, a parent, a friend—someone for whom we feel responsibility, for whom we ache with concern. They have been taught the gospel. They have made covenants. And yet they go on in disobedience or neglect, despite the emptiness we know that brings them. The choice to repent or to remain a prisoner of sin is their own. Yet knowing something of how the trap of inaction and resistance was built in their minds and hearts may help us hear more easily the answer to our fervent prayer: "Please, Heavenly Father, what can I do to help?"

### **Satan tempts us to procrastinate**

That temptation to delay comes from our enemy, Lucifer. He knows that we can never be truly happy unless we have hope in this life and then realization, in the next, of eternal life. It is the greatest of all the gifts of God. It is to live in families forever with our Heavenly Father and with Jesus Christ and to have eternal increase. Satan wants us to be miser-

able as he is. And he knows that we can have that true happiness only if we are washed clean through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, by deep and continuing repentance, and the making and keeping of sacred covenants offered only through God's authorized servants. The scriptures confirm the hazard:

"Wherefore, if ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; and no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever" (1 Nephi 10:21).

And so Satan tempts with procrastination throughout our days of probation. Any choice to delay repentance gives him the chance to steal happiness from one of the spirit children of our Heavenly Father.

We have all been tempted with that delay. We know from our own experience that President Spencer W. Kimball was right when he wrote, "One of the most serious human defects in all ages is procrastination," and then he defined it: "an unwillingness to accept personal responsibilities *now*" (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982], 48; italics in original). And so Satan works on both our desire to think we have no cause to repent and our desire to push anything unpleasant into the future. He has tempted you and me, and those we love, with thoughts like this: "God is so loving; surely He won't hold me personally responsible for mistakes which are simply the result of being human." And then, if that fails, there is the thought that will almost surely come: "Well, I may be responsible to repent, but this is not a good time to start. If I wait, later will be better."

### **We all need to repent**

There are some truths which expose those lies intended to tempt us to pro-

crastinate repentance. Let's start with the deception, which is so attractive, that we have no need to repent.

The truth is that we all need repentance. If we are capable of reason and past the age of eight, we all need the cleansing that comes through applying the full effects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. When that is clear, we cannot be tricked into delay by the subtle question: "Have I crossed the line of serious sin, or can I put off even thinking about repentance?" The question that really matters is this: "How can I learn to sense even the beginning of sin and so repent early?"

### **We are not helpless victims**

A second truth about our accountability is to know that we are not the helpless victims of our circumstances. The world tries to tell us that the opposite is true: imperfections in our parents or our faulty genetic inheritance is presented to us as absolving us of personal responsibility. But difficult as circumstances may be, they do not relieve us of accountability for our actions or our inactions. Nephi was right. God gives no commandments to the children of men save He prepares a way for them to obey. However difficult our circumstances, we can repent.

### **We are personally accountable**

Similarly, the world might be willing to excuse our bad behavior because those around us behave badly. It is not true that the behavior of others removes our responsibility for our own. God's standards for our behavior are unchanged whether or not others choose to rise to them.

That becomes especially difficult when others hurt us and we feel justified in our anger. It is a lie that our anger justifies our impulse to hurt or ignore our

antagonists. We are to forgive to be forgiven. To wait for them to repent before we forgive and repent is to allow them to choose for us a delay which could cost us happiness here and hereafter.

Finally, we are personally accountable because the Lord has given us ample warning. We receive the Spirit of Christ at birth to tell us right from wrong and to allow us to experience the connection between sin and unhappiness. From the beginning of time He has sent prophets to speak against sin and to invite faith and repentance. He has restored the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Gordon B. Hinckley is His living prophet, holding all the keys of the priesthood which allow those who live now to repent and to choose to gain eternal life. We are made accountable this day as the Holy Ghost confirms that these words are true.

Even the acceptance of personal responsibility may not overcome the temptation to believe that now is not the time to repent. "Now" can seem so difficult, and "later" appear so much easier. The truth is that today is always a better day to repent than any tomorrow. First, sin has its debilitating effects on us. The very faith we need to repent is weakened by delay. The choice to continue in sin diminishes our faith and lessens our right to claim the Holy Ghost as our companion and comforter.

### **Delay results in lost opportunities**

And second, even should we be forgiven at some later time, the Lord cannot restore the good effects our repentance today might have had on those we love and are to serve. That is particularly poignant for the parents of young children. In those tender years there are chances for shaping and lifting spirits which may never come again. But even the grandfather who may have missed chances with his own children might, by

choosing to repent today, do for grandchildren what he once could have done for their parents.

### **Earnest prayer essential to repentance**

When responsibility is accepted and the urgency to repent is felt, the question may come, "Where do I start?" Each life is unique. But for all, repentance will surely include passing through the portal of humble prayer. Our Father in Heaven can allow us to feel fully the conviction of our sins. He knows the depths of our remorse. He can then direct what we must do to qualify for forgiveness. For serious sin, we will need to confess to a judge in Israel and accept his guidance. Prayer alone will in that case not be enough. But for all of us, whatever the gravity of our sins, prayer will open the door to repentance and forgiveness. Without earnest prayer, repentance and cleansing are not possible. When the door is opened by prayer, there is possibility for peace.

One of the questions we must ask of our Heavenly Father in private prayer is this: "What have I done today, or not done, which displeases Thee? If I can only know, I will repent with all my heart without delay." That humble prayer will be answered. And the answers will surely include the assurance that asking today was better than waiting to ask tomorrow.

### **"This life is the time"**

I testify that the words of a servant of God, spoken long ago, are true:

"And now, my brethren, I would that, after ye have received so many witnesses, seeing that the holy scriptures testify of these things, ye come forth and bring fruit unto repentance.

"Yea, I would that ye would come forth and harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; and therefore,

if ye will repent and harden not your hearts, immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you.

"For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors.

"And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed.

"Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world" (Alma 34:30-34).

### **It is never too late or too hard to repent**

There is another temptation to be resisted. It is to yield to the despairing thought that it is too hard and too late to repent. I knew a man once who could have thought that and given up. When he was 12 he was ordained a deacon. Some of his friends tempted him to begin to smoke. He began to feel uncomfortable in church. He left his little town, not finishing high school, to begin a life following construction jobs across the United States. He was a heavy-equipment operator. He married. They had children. The marriage ended in a bitter divorce. He lost his children. He lost an eye in an accident. He lived alone in boardinghouses. He lost everything he owned except what he could carry in a trunk.

One night, as he prepared to move yet again, he decided to lighten the load of that trunk. Beneath the junk of years, he found a book. He never knew how it got there. It was the Book of Mormon. He read it through, and the Spirit told him it was true. He knew then that all those years ago he had walked away from the true Church of Jesus Christ and from the happiness which could have been his.

Later, he was my more-than-70-year-old district missionary companion. I asked the people we were teaching, as I testified of the power of the Savior's Atonement, to look at him. He had been washed clean and given a new heart, and I knew they would see that in his face. I told the people that what they saw was evidence that the Atonement of Jesus Christ could wash away *all* the corrosive effects of sin.

That was the only time he ever rebuked me. He told me in the darkness outside the trailer where we had been teaching that I should have told the people that while God was able to give him a new heart, He had not been able to give him back his wife and his children and what he might have done for them. But he had not looked back in sorrow and regret for what might have been. He moved forward, lifted by faith, to what yet might be.

One day he told me that in a dream the night before, the sight in his blind eye was restored. He realized that the dream was a glimpse of a future day, walking among loving people in the light of a glorious resurrection. Tears of joy ran down the deeply lined face of that towering, raw-boned man. He spoke to me quietly, with a radiant smile. I don't remember what he said he saw, but I remember that his face shone with happy anticipation as he described the view. With the Lord's help and the miracle of that book in the bottom of a trunk, it had not for him been too late nor the way too hard.

### **"Please, do not delay"**

I testify that God the Father lives. I know that. And He loves us. His Only Begotten Son lives. Because He was resurrected, we too will live again. We will see then those we have loved and who have loved us. We can through faith and obedience have family associations forever. Those in our families who love us, on both sides of the veil, would say as we consider whether to humble our hearts and repent, "Please, do not delay." That is the Savior's invitation and His plea. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **President Monson**

Elders Stephen B. Oveson and David R. Stone of the Seventy have just spoken to us, followed by Elder Henry B. Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will commence in the Tabernacle this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain daylight time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow thereafter.

We express gratitude to these wonderful children from the Lehi Primary Choir for the beautiful music they provided this afternoon. They will now sing "Come, Follow Me," after which Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following Elder Holland's remarks, the choir will sing "I Feel My Savior's Love." The benediction will then be offered by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Quorum of the Seventy.

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The choir sang "Come, Follow Me."

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