

10. Moses 5:4.
11. Moses 5:12.
12. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:22.
13. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:1-4; 132:19-20.
14. *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee* (1996), 292.
15. See "What It Means to Be a Daughter of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 101.
16. Moses 4:12.
17. In Conference Report, Oct. 1993, 98; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73.
18. See Abraham 3:26.

## Elder Henry B. Eyring

### A turning to fervent, heartfelt prayer

The world seems to be in commotion. There are wars and rumors of wars. The economies of whole continents are faltering. Crops are failing from lack of rain in places all over the earth. And the people in peril have flooded heaven with prayers. In public and in private, they are petitioning God for help, for comfort, and for direction.

You have probably noticed, as I have in recent days, that prayers have not only become more numerous but more heartfelt. I often am seated on the stand in a meeting near the person who has been asked to pray. I have listened recently with wonder. The words spoken are clearly inspired by God, both eloquent and wise. And the tone is that of a loving child seeking help, not as we might from an earthly parent but from an all-powerful Heavenly Father who knows our needs before we ask.

Such a turning to fervent prayer when the world seems out of joint is as old as mankind. In times of tragedy and danger, people turn to God in prayer. Even the ancient King David would recognize what is happening. You remember his words from the book of Psalms:

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

"And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."<sup>1</sup>

### "I hope that the change lasts"

The great increase in heartfelt prayer, and the public acceptance of it, has been remarkable to me and to others. More than once in recent days, someone has said to me with great intensity and with a sound of worry in the voice, "I hope that the change lasts."

That worry is justified. Our own personal experience and God's record of His dealing with His children teaches us that. Dependence upon God can fade quickly when prayers are answered. And when the trouble lessens, so do the prayers. The Book of Mormon repeats that sad story over and over again.

### The awful pattern of forgetting God

From the book of Helaman, "O, how could you have forgotten your God in the very day that he has delivered you?"<sup>2</sup> And later from the same book, after God had answered prayers with gracious kindness, the awful pattern is described again:

"And thus we can behold how false, and also the unsteadiness of the hearts of the children of men; yea, we can see that the Lord in his great infinite goodness doth bless and prosper those who put their trust in him.

"Yea, and we may see at the very time when he doth prosper his people, yea, in the increase of their fields, their flocks and their herds, and in gold, and in silver,

and in all manner of precious things of every kind and art; sparing their lives, and delivering them out of the hands of their enemies; softening the hearts of their enemies that they should not declare wars against them; yea, and in fine, doing all things for the welfare and happiness of his people; yea, then is the time that they do harden their hearts, and do forget the Lord their God, and do trample under their feet the Holy One—yea, and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.

"And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, yea, except he doth visit them with death and with terror, and with famine and with all manner of pestilence, they will not remember him."<sup>3</sup>

### The reasons why some forget God

And now, from the next words of that same scripture, we learn why it is we forget so easily the source of our blessings and cease to feel our need to pray with faith:

"O how foolish, and how vain, and how evil, and devilish, and how quick to do iniquity, and how slow to do good, are the children of men; yea, how quick to hearken unto the words of the evil one, and to set their hearts upon the vain things of the world!

"Yea, how quick to be lifted up in pride; yea, how quick to boast, and do all manner of that which is iniquity; and how slow are they to remember the Lord their God, and to give ear unto his counsels, yea, how slow to walk in wisdom's paths!

"Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels, and they will not that he should be their guide."<sup>4</sup>

From those three short verses of scripture, we see three causes for the sad drift away from humble prayer. First, while God

implores us to pray, the enemy of our souls belittles and then derides it. The warning from 2 Nephi is true:

"And now, my beloved brethren, I perceive that ye ponder still in your hearts; and it grieveth me that I must speak concerning this thing. For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit which teacheth a man to pray ye would know that ye must pray; for the evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray."<sup>5</sup>

Second, God is forgotten out of vanity. A little prosperity and peace, or even a turn slightly for the better, can bring us feelings of self-sufficiency. We can feel quickly that we are in control of our lives, that the change for the better is our own doing, not that of a God who communicates to us through the still, small voice of the Spirit. Pride creates a noise within us which makes the quiet voice of the Spirit hard to hear. And soon, in our vanity, we no longer even listen for it. We can come quickly to think we don't need it.

The third cause is rooted deeply within us. We are spirit children of a loving Heavenly Father, who placed us in mortality to see if we would choose—freely choose—to keep His commandments and come unto His Beloved Son. They do not compel us. They cannot, for that would interfere with the plan of happiness. And so there is in us a God-given desire to be responsible for our own choices.

### Be submissive, putting off the natural man

That desire to make our own choices is part of the upward pull toward eternal life. But it can, if we see life only through our mortal eyes, make dependence on God difficult or even impossible when we feel such a powerful desire to be independent. This true doctrine can sound hard:

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of

Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father.”<sup>6</sup>

Those who submit like a child do it because they know that the Father wants only the happiness of His children and that only He knows the way. That is the testimony we must have to keep praying like a submissive child, in the good times as well as the times of trouble.

### **What it means to be diligent in prayer**

With that faith we will be able to pray for what we want and appreciate whatever we get. Only with that faith will we pray with the diligence God requires. When God has commanded us to pray, He has used words like “pray unceasingly” and “pray always” and “mighty prayer.”

Those commands do not require using many words. In fact, the Savior has told us that we need not multiply words when we pray. The diligence in prayer which God requires does not take flowery speech nor long hours of solitude. That is taught clearly in Alma in the Book of Mormon:

“Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Joseph’s example of diligence in prayer**

Our hearts can be drawn out to God only when they are filled with love for Him and trust in His goodness. Joseph Smith, even as a boy, gave us an example of how we can come to pray from a heart filled with the love of God and then pray unceasingly through a life filled with trials and blessings.

Joseph started for the grove to pray with faith that a loving God would answer his prayer and relieve his confusion. He gained that assurance reading the word of

God and receiving a witness that it was true. He said that he read in James, “Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”<sup>8</sup> His faith to ask of God in prayer came after pondering a scripture which assured him of God’s loving nature. He prayed, as we must, with faith in a loving God.

He prayed with the intent not only to listen but to obey. He did not ask only to know the truth. He was committed to act upon whatever God would communicate to him. His written account makes clear that he prayed with real intent, determined to comply with whatever answer he received. He wrote:

“Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know, and unless I could get more wisdom than I then had, I would never know; for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible.”<sup>9</sup>

The Father and His Beloved Son appeared to him in answer to his prayer. And he was told how to act, as he had desired. He obeyed like a child. He was told to join none of the churches. He did as he was told. And because of his faithfulness, in the days and months and years ahead his prayers were answered with a flood of light and truth. The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the keys of the kingdom of God were restored to the earth. His humble dependence on God led to the Restoration of the gospel, with authority and sacred ordinances. Because of that Restoration, we have the chance to choose the most priceless independence to be free of the bondage of sin through

the cleansing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Joseph Smith's mission was unique, yet his humble prayer can be a helpful model for us. He began, as we must, with faith in a loving God who can and wants to communicate with us and help us. That faith was rooted in impressions which came to him as he pondered the words of God's servants in the scriptures.

We can and must go often and carefully to the word of God. If we become casual in our study of the scriptures, we will become casual in our prayers. We may not cease to pray, but our prayers will become more repetitive, more mechanical, lacking real intent. Our hearts cannot be drawn out to a God we do not know, and the scriptures and the words of living prophets help us know Him. As we know Him better, we love Him more.

We must also serve Him to love Him. Joseph Smith did that, finally surrendering life itself in His service. Joseph prayed with the intent to obey. That obedience always includes service to others. Service in God's work allows us to feel a part of what He feels and come to know Him.

"For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?"<sup>10</sup> As our love for Him increases, so will our desire to approach the Father in prayer.

### **Ensuring we do not drift from prayer**

The words and the music of this conference will lead you to do what will strengthen you against the danger of a drift away from heartfelt prayer. From what you hear you will feel promptings to go to the scriptures. Follow the promptings. You will be reminded in this conference of service you committed to give when you entered the waters of baptism. Choose to obey.

If you ponder the scriptures and begin to do what you covenanted with God to do, I can promise you that you will feel more love for God and more of His love for you. And with that, your prayers will come from the heart, full of thanks and of pleading. You will feel a greater dependence on God. You will find the courage and the determination to act in His service, without fear and with peace in your heart. You will pray always. And you will not forget Him, no matter what the future brings.

I bear you my testimony that God the Father lives. He loves us. He hears our prayers, and He answers with what is best for us. As we come to know Him through His words and in His service, we will love Him more. I know that is true.

The fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the true Church of Jesus Christ have been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The keys of the priesthood are only in this Church. I know as surely as I live that President Gordon B. Hinckley holds and exercises the keys on the earth. Jesus Christ lives—I know that—and He leads His Church today. He will teach you through His servants in this conference.

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### **NOTES**

1. Psalm 9:9–10.
2. Helaman 7:20.
3. Helaman 12:1–3.
4. Helaman 12:4–6.
5. 2 Nephi 32:8.
6. Mosiah 3:19.
7. Alma 34:27.
8. James 1:5; see Joseph Smith—History 1:11.
9. Joseph Smith—History 1:12.
10. Mosiah 5:13.

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The choir sang "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

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### **President Monson**

The choir has sung "I Saw a Mighty Angel Fly."

As you leave this morning, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in your driving.

We express our appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided during this session.

President James E. Faust, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker. Following his remarks, the choir will sing "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet." The benediction will be offered by Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric. The conference will then be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## **President James E. Faust**

### **The incomparable Atonement**

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I come humbly to this pulpit this morning because I wish to speak about the greatest event in all history. That singular event was the incomparable Atonement of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. This was the most transcendent act that has ever taken place, yet it is the most difficult to understand.

My reason for wanting to learn all I can about the Atonement is partly selfish: Our salvation depends on believing in and accepting the Atonement.<sup>1</sup> Such acceptance requires a continual effort to understand it more fully. The Atonement advances our mortal course of learning by making it possible for our natures to become perfect.<sup>2</sup> All of us have sinned and need to repent to fully pay *our* part of the debt. When we sincerely repent, the Savior's magnificent Atonement pays the *rest* of that debt.<sup>3</sup>

Paul gave a simple explanation for the need of the Atonement: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>4</sup> Jesus Christ was appointed and foreordained to be our Redeemer before the world was formed. With His divine sonship, His sinless life, the shedding of His blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, His excruciating death on the cross and subsequent bodily Resurrection from the grave, He became the author of our

salvation and made a perfect Atonement for all mankind.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding what we can of the Atonement and the Resurrection of Christ helps us obtain a knowledge of Him and of His mission.<sup>6</sup> Any increase in our understanding of His atoning sacrifice draws us closer to Him. Literally, the Atonement means to be "at one" with Him. The nature of the Atonement and its effects is so infinite, so unfathomable, and so profound that it lies beyond the knowledge and comprehension of mortal man.

I am profoundly grateful for the principle of saving grace. Many people think they need only confess that Jesus is the Christ and then they are saved by grace alone. We cannot be saved by grace alone, "for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, *after* all we can do."

### **A parable to help us understand the Atonement**

Some years ago, President Gordon B. Hinckley told "something of a parable" about "a one room school house in the mountains of Virginia where the boys were so rough no teacher had been able to handle them.

"Then one day an inexperienced young teacher applied. He was told that every teacher had received an awful beating, but the teacher accepted the risk. The first day of school the teacher asked the