

A Priceless Heritage of Hope

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When you choose whether to make or keep a covenant with God, you choose whether you will leave an inheritance of hope to those who might follow your example.

My dear brothers and sisters, some of you were invited to this meeting by missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Those missionaries may have already invited you to make the choice of covenanting with God by being baptized.

Others of you are listening because you accepted the invitation of a parent, a wife, or perhaps a child, extended to you in the hopes that you will choose to put the covenants you have already made with God back into the center of your lives. Some of you who are listening have already made the choice to return to follow the Savior and are feeling today the joy of His welcome.

Whoever you are and wherever you may be, you hold in your hands the happiness of more people than you can now imagine. Every day and every hour you can choose to make or keep a covenant with God.

Wherever you are on the path to inherit the gift of eternal life, you have the opportunity to show many people the way to greater happiness. When you choose whether to make or keep a covenant with God, you choose whether you will leave an inheritance of hope to those who might follow your example.

You and I have been blessed with the promise of such an inheritance. I owe much of my happiness in life to a man I never met in mortal life. He was an orphan who became one of my great-grandparents. He left me a priceless heritage of hope. Let me tell you some of the part he played in creating that inheritance for me.

His name was Heinrich Eyring. He was born into great wealth. His father, Edward, had a large estate in Coburg, in what is now Germany. His mother was Viscountess Charlotte Von Blomberg. Her father was the keeper of the lands of the king of Prussia.

Heinrich was Charlotte and Edward's first son. Charlotte died at the age of 31, after the birth of her third child. Edward died soon thereafter, having lost all his property and wealth in a failed investment. He was only 40 years of age. He left three orphaned children.

Heinrich, my great-grandfather, had lost both of his parents and a great worldly inheritance. He was penniless. He recorded in his history that he felt his best hope lay in going to America. Although he had neither family nor friends there, he had a feeling of hope about going to America. He first went to New York City. Later he moved to St. Louis, Missouri.

In St. Louis one of his co-workers was a Latter-day Saint. From him he obtained a copy of a pamphlet written by Elder Parley P. Pratt. He read it and then studied every word he could obtain about the Latter-day Saints. He prayed to know if there really were angels that appeared to men, whether there was a living prophet, and whether he had found a true and revealed religion.

After two months of careful study and prayer, Heinrich had a dream in which he was told he was to be baptized. A man whose name and priesthood I hold in sacred memory, Elder William Brown, was to perform the ordinance. Heinrich was baptized in a pool of rainwater on March 11, 1855, at 7:30 in the morning.

I believe that Heinrich Eyring knew then that what I am teaching you today is true. He knew that the happiness of eternal life comes through family bonds which continue forever. Even when he had so recently found the Lord's plan of happiness, he knew that his hope for eternal joy depended on the free choices of others to follow his example. His hope of eternal happiness depended on people not yet born.

As a part of our family's inheritance of hope, he left a history to his descendants.

In that history I can feel his love for those of us who would follow him. In his words I feel his hope that his descendants might choose to follow him on the path back to our heavenly home. He knew it would not be one great choice to make to do so but many small choices. I quote from his history:

“From the time I first heard Elder Andrus speak ... I have always attended the meeting of the Latter day Saints and the instances are very rare indeed, when I [have] failed to go to meeting, it being at the same time my duty to do so.

“I name this in my history that my children may imitate my example and never neglect this ... important duty [to assemble] with the Saints.”¹

Heinrich knew that in sacrament meetings we could renew our promise to always remember the Savior and have His Spirit to be with us.

It was that Spirit that sustained him on the mission to which he was called only a few months after accepting the baptismal covenant. He left as his heritage his example of staying faithful to his mission for six years in what was then called the Indian Territories. To receive his release from his mission, he walked from Oklahoma to Salt Lake City, a distance of approximately 1,100 miles (1,770 km).

Soon thereafter he was called by the prophet of God to move to southern Utah. From there he answered another call to serve a mission in his native Germany. He then accepted the invitation of an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ to help build up the Latter-day Saint colonies in northern Mexico. From there he was called to Mexico City as a full-time missionary again. He honored those calls. He lies buried in a small cemetery in Colonia Juárez, Chihuahua, Mexico.

I recite these facts not to claim greatness for him or for what he did or for his descendants. I recite those facts to honor him for the example of faith and hope that was in his heart.

He accepted those calls because of his faith that the resurrected Christ and our Heavenly Father had appeared to Joseph Smith in a grove of trees in the state of New York. He accepted them because he had faith that the priesthood keys in the Lord's Church had been restored with the power to seal families forever, if only they had

sufficient faith to keep their covenants.

Like Heinrich Eyring, my ancestor, you may be the first in your family to lead the way to eternal life along the path of sacred covenants made and kept with diligence and faith. Each covenant brings with it duties and promises. For all of us, as they were for Heinrich, those duties are sometimes simple but are often difficult. But remember, the duties must sometimes be difficult because their purpose is to move us along the path to live forever with Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, in families.

You remember the words from the book of Abraham:

“And there stood one among them that was like unto God, and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell;

“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;

“And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”²

Keeping our second estate depends on our making covenants with God and faithfully performing the duties they require of us. It takes faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior to keep sacred covenants for a lifetime.

Because Adam and Eve did fall, we have temptation, trials, and death as our universal inheritance. However, our loving Heavenly Father gave us the gift of His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, as our Savior. That great gift and blessing of the Atonement of Jesus Christ brings a universal inheritance: the promise of the Resurrection and the possibility of eternal life to all who are born.

The greatest of all the blessings of God, eternal life, will come to us only as we make covenants offered in the true Church of Jesus Christ by His authorized servants. Because of the Fall, we all need the cleansing effects of baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. These ordinances must be performed by those who possess the proper priesthood authority. Then, with the help of the Light of Christ and the Holy Ghost, we can keep all the covenants we make with God, especially those offered in His temples. Only in that way, and with that help, can anyone claim his or her rightful inheritance as a child of God in a family forever.

To some listening to me, that may seem a nearly hopeless dream.

You have seen faithful parents sorrow over children who have rejected or who have chosen to break their covenants with God. But those parents can take heart and hope from other parental experiences.

Alma's son and King Mosiah's sons returned from fierce rebellion against the covenants and the commandments of God. Alma the Younger saw his son Corianton turn from gross sin to faithful service. The Book of Mormon also records the miracle of the Lamanites putting aside traditions of hating righteousness to covenanting to die to maintain peace.

An angel was sent to the young Alma and the sons of Mosiah. The angel came because of the faith and prayers of their fathers and of God's people. From those examples of the power of the Atonement working in human hearts,

you can receive courage and comfort.

The Lord has given us all the source of hope as we struggle to help those we love accept their eternal inheritance. He has made promises to us as we keep trying to gather people to Him, even when they resist His invitation to do so. Their resistance saddens Him, but He does not quit, nor should we. He sets the perfect example for us with His persistent love: “And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not.”³

We can depend on that unfailing desire of the Savior to bring all of Heavenly Father’s spirit children back to their home with Him. Every faithful parent, grandparent, and great-grandparent shares in that desire. Heavenly Father and the Savior are our perfect examples of what we can and must do. They never force righteousness because righteousness must be chosen. They make righteousness discernible to us, and They let us see that its fruits are delicious.

Every person born into the world receives the Light of Christ, which helps us see and feel what is right and what is wrong. God has sent mortal servants who can, by the Holy Ghost, help us recognize what He would have us do and what He forbids. God makes it attractive to choose the right by letting us feel the effects of our choices. If we choose the right, we will find happiness—in time. If we choose evil, there comes sorrow and regret—in time. Those effects are sure. Yet they are often delayed for a purpose. If the blessings were immediate, choosing the right would not build faith. And since sorrow is also sometimes greatly delayed, it takes faith to feel the need to seek forgiveness for sin early rather than after we feel its sorrowful and painful effects.

Father Lehi sorrowed over the choices made by some of his sons and their families. He was a great and good man—a prophet of God. He often testified of our Savior, Jesus Christ, to them. He was an example of obedience and service when the Lord called him to leave all his worldly possessions to spare his family from destruction. At the very end of his life, he was still testifying to his children. Like the Savior—and despite his power to discern their hearts and to see the future both sad and wonderful—Lehi kept his arms outstretched to draw his family toward salvation.

Today millions of the descendants of Father Lehi are justifying his hope for them.

What can you and I do to draw from Lehi’s example? We can draw from his example by studying scripture prayerfully and by observation.

I suggest that you take both the short and the long view as you try to give the inheritance of hope to your family. In the short run, there will be troubles and Satan will roar. And there are things to wait for patiently, in faith, knowing that the Lord acts in His own time and in His own way.

There are things you can do early, when those you love are young. Remember that daily family prayer, family scripture study, and sharing our testimony in sacrament meeting are easier and more effective when children are young. Young children are often more sensitive to the Spirit than we realize.

When they are older, they will remember the hymns they sang with you. Even more than recalling music, they will remember the words of scripture and testimony. The Holy Ghost can bring all things to their remembrance,

but the words of scriptures and hymns will last the longest. Those memories will exert a pull that may bring them back when they wander for a time, possibly for years, from the pathway home to eternal life.

We will need the long view when those we love feel the pull of the world and the cloud of doubt seems to overwhelm their faith. We have faith, hope, and charity to guide us and to strengthen them.

I have seen that as a counselor to two living prophets of God. They are individuals with unique personalities. Yet they seem to share a consistent optimism. When someone raises an alarm about something in the Church, their most frequent response is “Oh, things will work out.” They generally know more about the problem than the people sounding the alarm.

They also know the way of the Lord, and so they are always hopeful about His kingdom. They know He is at its head. He is all-powerful and He cares. If you let Him be the leader of your family, things will work out.

Some of Heinrich Eyring’s descendants have seemed to wander. But many of his great-great-grandchildren go to temples of God at 6:00 in the morning to perform ordinances for ancestors they have never met. They go out of the heritage of hope he left. He left an inheritance that is being claimed by many of his descendants.

After all we can do in faith, the Lord will justify our hopes for greater blessings for our families than we can imagine. He wants the best for them and for us, as His children.

We are all children of a living God. Jesus of Nazareth is His Beloved Son and our resurrected Savior. This is His Church. In it are the keys of the priesthood, and so families can be forever. This is our priceless heritage of hope. I testify that it is true in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Henry Eyring reminiscences, 1896, typescript, Church History Library, 16–21.

2. Abraham 3:24–26.

3. 3 Nephi 10:5.