

## ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

### Strength Through Repentance

By Elder Leonard Woo

Of the Seventy

Repentance is like the cutter that breaks the chain of sins that ties and strangles our faith. When we repent of our sins and live in harmony with the teachings of Jesus Christ, we receive great knowledge, wisdom, strength, and power in our lives. We read in Ether 12:27, “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”

Although the word repentance is not specifically mentioned in the above scripture, this vital principle is implied in the verse. It tells how, in addition to faith and humility, God transforms our weaknesses into strengths. Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah are great illustrations of how weak and disobedient individuals can become strong and powerful instruments in the hands of God through the process of repentance. (See Mosiah 27.)

Likewise, this amazing transformation can and must take place in our lives. Our own righteous desire and intense efforts in repentance by themselves are insufficient for us to become like the Saviour. If we carefully read Ether 12:27 again, we will notice these two phrases: “my grace is sufficient for all men . . .” and “then will I make weak things become strong unto them.” They tell us that after doing all that we can, it is Christ who has the power to bring about the significant changes in us that will turn our weaknesses into strengths.

I know from personal experience that this principle is true. I could overcome some

weaknesses through my own determined will and effort. However, there are many weaknesses on which I could not make progress, let alone overcome them without exercising faith in God and trusting in His grace. We may be able to overcome part of our fallen nature to reach a terrestrial standard of personal behaviour. However, it is impossible to become a celestial being and to achieve exaltation without Christ’s mercy, grace, and Atonement.

The prophet Moroni added, “and in Christ there should come every good thing (Moroni 7:22).” Examples of these good things include faith, patience, meekness, wisdom, charity, ability to suffer long, and power to love and to forgive. These good things which are conditional on our faith and repentance will give us strength and wisdom in our daily life.

I wish to share a few counsels on how to ensure that our efforts in repentance can really bring us strength:

1. Friend, Not Foe: First, we must treat repentance as a helpful friend to be embraced and not as a foe to be avoided. The manner by which we view repentance will determine how well this powerful refining principle will work in our lives. If it is viewed as a lifelong friend, it will initially help us with our serious sins and then with our lesser sins and weaknesses. Because it is unlikely that we will achieve perfection in this life, repentance will be needed till we finish our mortal journey.



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2. Remorse or Regret: Remorse or Godly sorrow for sins is an important part of repentance. The deep anguish of remorse that one feels will give him the impetus to seek forgiveness and restitution for his sins. Remorse has a powerful cleansing power when allowed to run its full course. If our feeling is one of regret that we were caught or that the resultant punishment was severe, then we are unlikely to receive strength from repentance. “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation . . . but sorrow of the world worketh death (see 2 Corinthians 7:9–10).”
3. Humility or Humiliation: In sincere repentance, we must be humble enough to subject ourselves to all that God wishes to impose upon us and not be embarrassed that the resultant consequences will cause us to “lose face” with our family or church friends.
4. Strength or Stress: Some view repentance as stressful. Others view it as an opportunity to have a stronger bond with the Saviour and to tap into His strength to achieve greater faith. Yes, repentance can be painful and humbling, especially during its initial phase, but the soothing, comforting and healing “balm of Gilead” (see Jeremiah 8:22, 46:11, 51:8) will flow in due time and will bring strength and peace that “passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7) into our lives.

It is vitally important for those who have committed sins to know that even though God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, He has infinite love for all sinners (see D&C 1:31). We must repent now or perish later. Alma expressed deeply his feeling about the Saints who procrastinate the day of their repentance in these words: “I wish from the inmost part

of my heart, yea, with great anxiety even unto pain, that ye would hearken unto my words, and cast off your sins, and not procrastinate the day of your repentance” (Alma 13:27). Repentance is easier if we do it sooner. Sins are like chains that bind us—each day of procrastination will add one more layer of chain, making it harder for us to cast it off.

It is important to know that we do not have to struggle through the repentance process alone. The Saviour knows and understands our pain, anguish, wounds, and heartache, and He suffers them for us. There are also many who are willing, capable, and eager to help. Some, such as our bishop, parents, spouse, siblings, and home and visiting teachers, are given special discernment, ability, and power to help us. Our bishops in particular are given specific keys, discernment, and power to work with us in our repentance process.

Because repentance is such an important saving principle, Satan will do all he can to prevent us from embracing it. He does it by putting thoughts in our hearts and minds to convince us that we are beyond hope, that we are weak and will not have the strength to repent, or that the sins are not serious enough to require repentance.

I testify that through faith in Christ and continuing repentance, we will be worthy of the companionship of the Holy Ghost. When we are close to the Holy Ghost, we will be meek, teachable, obedient, trusting, wise, and anxious to keep all of His commandments and to do good always. I testify that it is in Christ that all good things happen. Let us always treat repentance as a friend and not delay the day of our repentance. We will be stronger and happier after completing each needed repentance process. ■

# Instrument in His Hands

Sister Monica Gupta

My conversion story can closely be related to a scripture in the Holy Bible, Matthew 22:14, which says, “Many are called, but few are chosen,” and I surely feel I was a chosen one.

I was born a non-Christian. All my life I followed what my parents and family members were following when it came to godly worship. My first point of contact with Christianity was my art teacher, when I was barely 10 years old. She was a follower of Jesus Christ, a lady of firm faith and godly countenance. I, being her favorite student, was often invited to be a part of her family's festivities. Being in her home, I got to know about Jesus Christ and His eternal sacrifice for all humans, including myself.

My little mind was not able to comprehend everything that she taught me, but the seed of faith was being planted in my innocent heart while I myself was unaware of it. Time passed by and my love for Christ became stronger in my heart, to the extent that I started wearing a cross around my neck as His symbol. I was scolded many times for that. Though still following my previous rituals, I

would often wonder in my heart that if God is one, why did we have so many versions of Him. If He really existed, who was He and where was He? Where did I come from, what's the purpose of my very existence, and what would happen to me and my loved ones after we die? What's my relationship with God? Does He listen to my prayers? Does He know me? Does He even care that I exist? I had so many questions.

Unfortunately no one was able to give me satisfactory answers, but far from these confusing thoughts, I was unaware that God was preparing me for a sacred cause and had great plans lined up for me. During these times, my life went through a series of major ups and downs, but I always felt His loving arms protecting me in all circumstances. I could feel the warmth of His divine love upon me always.

One hot afternoon in May 2009, two missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stopped by my home. They met my younger brother, inquiring about some address. They looked weary and hungry, so my brother invited them in to have some food. Once they were filled, they introduced themselves and shared a small message

about the Restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They left a card with their phone number on it and invited my brother to church the following week. Immediately my brother called me at work and told me all that happened and asked if I would like to accompany him to church. I at once agreed.

The moment I stepped into the church, a warm feeling came over me and I felt I belonged to this place forever and this is what I had been looking for. I attended all three meetings and felt the love of the Lord. I went to church every Sunday without a miss, started taking missionary lessons, actively participated in almost all Church activities, to the extent that other members could not guess that I was not yet a member. Soon my sister joined me for the discussions where we started learning more and more about Jesus and His eternal sacrifice; about the Book of Mormon; about Joseph Smith and how he was an instrument in the hands of the Lord to restore His true Church again on earth.

I started getting answers to the questions I had all my life and felt that finally my life had a meaning as a precious daughter of our loving Father in Heaven. Finally the blessed

day came, 27 December 2009, when my sister and I entered the waters of baptism and accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour. Since then life has never been the same again. I received my first calling two months after my baptism.

I was so inspired by the loving and selfless services of all those wonderful missionaries who taught us that I myself prayed and felt I should also serve the Lord. I filed my mission papers and got my mission call to serve in Philippines Manila Mission. I had the opportunity to enter the holy house

of the Lord, feel His spirit in abundance, and make higher covenants with Him. I received my patriarchal blessing and the Lord's eternal promises for my life that always reminds me that I must live worthy of my covenants or else I cannot expect those blessings to be fulfilled. Many of the blessings predicated are being manifested in my life and it's truly amazing.

I lived a dream of 18 months. Miraculously I got the gift of tongues to learn my mission language, Tagalog, quickly. I taught the gospel to hundreds of people: some of them rejected us,

some listened but never cared; however, some humbled themselves enough to accept and became a part of the Christ's restored Church. Every time I bore my testimony, I felt the Spirit so strong and I knew for myself all over again that Lord lives, is mindful of us, and has a perfect plan for each one of us. My mission taught me a great deal about life: the significance of humility, charity, service, and selfless love. It taught me to put others before myself. It taught me to never give up no matter how hard Satan tries on you. It taught me worldly love

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is all about asking and demanding love. However, divine love knows how to keep giving and giving without expecting in return just the way Lord Jesus Christ loves each one of us.

The Lord blessed me with some eternal friends in the form of members and converts in the Philippines. He also blessed me with the wonderful opportunity of personally meeting two of the living Apostles—Elder Russell M. Nelson and Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Standing next to Elder Nelson, I shared my conversion story and bore my testimony about the truthfulness of the gospel. He gave me a side hug and said, “Sister Gupta, I feel impressed to let you know that you are miracle of God.” Tears were flowing on my cheeks and I could feel the Spirit speaking to me and testifying that we are blessed to have living prophets and apostles to lead and guide us in these last days.

In this world of great turmoil and temptations, I know that God has not left us alone to struggle but has given His Spirit to guide us, provided we humble ourselves and are willing to heed the prompting of the Spirit and act upon them without delay. Having done so many

times, I could easily feel myself becoming an instrument in the Lord’s hands in reaching out to His children to help and comfort them.

In just four years the Lord has blessed me with ample opportunities to serve in His true Church in various callings and assignments. I truly feel that the gospel is the only answer for all the questions mankind might ever have, and it’s the only way which will unite us all in Christ. I know there is a perfect God who despite all odds immensely loves us. We are imperfect but He is always mindful of us. He wants us to cleanse ourselves from all ungodliness and go back to Him through His everlasting gospel. I learned that when we reach out to others to help, not only do they benefit from our kind gestures but it helps us become better people.

I bear my testimony that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Christ’s true Church on the face of the earth, led by a living prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, in these last days. He, along with the Twelve Apostles, members of the Seventy, and all the local Church leaders around the world, is called of God and receives divine guidance for all the mankind. I know the Book

of Mormon, the Holy Bible, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price are the word of God that help us to stay on the divine path. I know the Holy Ghost is real and if we live worthily, He acts as our constant companion and assist us in decision making in our day-to-day lives. I know that this life is neither the beginning nor the end. There was a life before this life and there will be a life after this life. This life is the time for us to prepare to meet God. Being anchored in the gospel of Jesus Christ can keep us grounded and firm to live eternally with our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

I am so grateful to be a member of this Church and to have accepted Jesus as my Saviour. The principles I learn in church are helping me every single day to become better than who I am today. And I know as we learn to put our trust in God and His eternal promises and do our best to live up to His expectations, we become instruments in His hands to reach out to His children and we can feel true peace and joy not only in this life but in the life to come. I know these things to be true, in the sacred name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, amen! ■

# The Joy of Family History and Temple Work

Robert Anthony

The work of salvation includes member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, temple and family history work, and teaching the gospel. When our prophets talk about hastening the work of the Lord, each of the above dimensions needs to be hastened. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed in a recent general conference that the hastening of the Lord's work is felt wherever where a saving ordinance is involved. (See Quentin L. Cook, "Roots and Branches," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 46.)

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) said, "Missionary work is not limited to proclaiming the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people now living on the earth. Missionary work is also continuing beyond the veil among the millions and even billions of the children of our Heavenly Father who have died either without hearing the gospel or without accepting it while they lived on the earth. Our great part in this aspect of missionary work is to perform on this earth the ordinances required for those who accept the gospel over there. The spirit world is full of spirits who are anxiously awaiting the performance of these earthly ordinances for them. I hope to see us dissolve the artificial boundary line we so often place between missionary work and the temple and genealogical work, because it is the same great redemptive work." (Spencer W. Kimball, "The Things of Eternity—Stand We in Jeopardy?", *Ensign*, Jan. 1977, 3).

The current population of the world is around seven billion. Member missionary work, convert retention, activation of less-active members, and

teaching the gospel focus on this seven billion people. Temple and family history work focus on those who have died and gone to the other side of the veil.

One demographic study reveals that there are about 60 to 70 billion people who have lived on this earth. The scope is enormous, yet many of us lack the perspective as to the vastness of work on the other side of the veil.

President Kimball said, "The day is coming and not too far ahead of us when all temples on this earth will be going night and day. There will be shifts, of course, and people will be coming in the morning and in the hours of the day and throughout the day and we will have no vacations for the temple. But there will be a corps of workers night and day almost to exhaustion, because of the importance of the work and the great number of people who lie asleep in the eternity and who are craving, needing, the blessings we can bring them" (address given at Priesthood Genealogy Seminar Banquet, August 4, 1977, Church History Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 4–5).

The *Gospel Principles* manual explains, "There is too much work to finish before the Millennium begins, so it will be completed during that time. Resurrected beings will help us correct the mistakes we have made in doing research concerning our dead ancestors. They will also help us find the information we need to complete our records. (*Gospel Principles*, (2009), 265).

But with the hastening of the work, that divine help is present right now with the spirit of Elijah attending the faithful ones. In the closing chapters of the Old Testament, Malachi writes the Lord's promise: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their



fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:5–6).

Perhaps one recent experience could illustrate this point. The 10th of December, 2014, is a memorable day because it was the birthday of my second daughter, Chelsea. On that very day, Elder Allan F. Packer who is currently the Executive Director of the Family History Department was in Bangalore for a special fireside on family history work. I left the birthday party in the hands of my wife and went to the fireside. It was a very touching meeting. We were introduced to a new booklet called *My Family*. I came back from the meeting pondering on the message that was shared.

Later that night I took out my computer and logged in to FamilySearch.org. For several months,

I had had some problems connecting my ancestors for whom I personally did the temple work in the Hong Kong temple. I had tried searching for them, but there were so many others with the same names. But that night I got on my knees and said to Heavenly Father, “if this spirit of Elijah does attend the faithful who desire for it, I need it now to complete my family tree.” After the prayer I saw somewhere on the website that there was help available through online chat. I logged in to the chat line and talked to the expert about my problem. After trying to help me for some time, the expert asked that I call the help desk to see if they could help. So I called up the help desk, and a senior sister missionary answered. She asked for some information that I couldn’t provide, and after

**Robert Anthony**

some discussion, she said that she was unable to help me either, but she bore her testimony that I shouldn't be discouraged, that the spirit of Elijah is true and would help me as I prayerfully continued to seek help. After I hung up the phone, I was determined not to give up. I said a prayer again and as I looked up at the computer screen, one entry among several in the list with the same names caught my attention. I was constrained to click on this particular entry. I realized with all the other pertinent information that it was indeed one of my grandfathers. That entry helped me access other members of my tree, but I noticed there were several duplicate entries. I again called the help desk, but this time it was easy for them to help me, because it was a common problem. After I hung up, I worked on ironing out the duplicates and joining all my ancestors whom I had previously identified into my family tree. It was about 4:00 a.m. when I completed my tree, and I was so emotional. There was no denying that the spirit of Elijah had indeed attended to me that night. I knew that my prayer had been answered.

Since then I have loved doing my family history work. I try to keep adding additional information about my ancestors as I find them, including photographs.

Elder Cook said in his recent general conference address that “we finally have the doctrine, the temples, and the technology for families to accomplish this glorious work of salvation.” (“Roots and Branches,” 47) I suggest we all start on this part of the work of salvation by foremost picking up the *My Family* booklet and filling in as much information as we can.

Next, create or ask the branch clerk or family historian to create an lds.org account, log in to FamilySearch.org, and enter the information that you have recorded in the book. As you start with

this small exercise, I promise the spirit of Elijah will start to attend to you, and you will find information about your ancestors never before comprehended. That information will come to you from other family members or you will have records come into your possession which will have the information you need. “Don't underestimate the influence of the deceased in assisting your efforts” said Elder Cook (“Roots and Branches,” 46–47).

As you have these names ready you will next have more desire to go to the temple and do the temple work for these “roots” of yours.

The back of the *My Family* booklet has this quote: “Any work you do in the temple is time well spent, but receiving ordinances vicariously for one of your ancestors will make the time in the temple more sacred, and even greater blessings will be received” (Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 93–94). Such was my joy in doing the temple work for each of my ancestors and more especially for my dad who passed away a year ago.

I close with a thought of anticipation that awaits all who do family history and temple work: I wonder what it will be like in the last days when the real things that matter in life are laid before our eyes. I wonder what will be the expressions of gratitude from all our ancestors who were identified and for whom the temple work have been done. What joy will be in their eyes to know that such ordinances, along with their faith and good works, have enabled them to inherit the promises of heaven?

I think we will indeed be received with open arms and everlasting gratitude. For such an experience may we be prepared to participate in I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

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