

ASIA AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ

Elder Steven L. Toronto

Of the Seventy

It was very late at night. A beloved mother, grandmother, and nurse was returning home. She had spent that night helping the sick. She was compassionate, loving, and faithful. Her life exemplified selfless service. As she was traveling home, a young man was also driving home. He was drunk and driving a car illegally. He did not see the red traffic light and did not notice a car already crossing his path. He sped into the intersection and hit the other car with great force. The woman in the car was hit, injured very seriously. She was taken to a hospital where doctors performed many surgeries to try to keep her alive. She struggled for her life for many weeks. She suffered great pain at that time and for many years after. Her medical costs were very high. The young man suffered only minor injuries. He was convicted of drunk driving and spent time in prison. This young man had committed a terrible sin.

Sin is part of our mortal existence. We all commit sin at some time in our lives. The consequences of sin to the sinner are significant and eternal. Without repentance, sins keep us from the presence of God (see 3 Nephi 27:19). The Atonement of Jesus Christ

gives us the ability to repent of our sins, be clean, and return to our Heavenly Father (see D&C 58:42).

The Savior teaches how to receive the blessings of His Atonement. He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; . . . For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30). If we have heavy burdens of sin, we can come unto Him. As we learn of Him, we can leave our heavy burdens of sin with Him but must be willing to take upon ourselves HIS yoke and HIS burden. His yoke and burden is the process of repentance. Compared to our heavy burdens of sin, the burden of repentance is “light” and is easy to carry when we are “yoked” together with the Savior and His Atonement.



Elder Steven L.

Toronto



The Atonement clearly helps sinners remove their burdens of sin, but what about victims of sins? What about the wonderful nurse? This good woman suffered greatly. She continues to be afflicted with physical, economic, and emotional consequences of the young man’s sin. His actions created many heavy burdens for her to carry. This woman’s family also suffered greatly. They experienced severe anxiety, worrying whether Grandma would live or die. They spent many hours helping and comforting her. Their lives were disrupted. Their physical, economic, emotional, and spiritual burdens were very heavy.

There were other victims of this young man’s sin. The young man’s parents, family, and friends experienced the anguish and shame of these acts. They had to worry about legal costs, manage his personal affairs, and participate in his trial. Their lives were interrupted while they shouldered many additional burdens related to his sin.

Where can these victims of sin turn for strength, comfort, peace, and healing? They too can turn to the Savior and His Atonement.

Elder Oaks recently taught, “In mortality we have the certainty of

death and the burden of sin. The Atonement of Jesus Christ offsets these two certainties of mortal life. But apart from death and sin, we have many other challenges as we struggle through mortality. Because of that same Atonement, our Savior can provide us the strength we need to overcome these mortal challenges” (Dallin H. Oaks, “Strengthened by the Atonement of Jesus Christ” *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 61).

As we understand fully the power of Christ’s Atonement, we begin to understand why it is described as “infinite and eternal” (Alma 34:14; see also verse 15). *Infinite* means extending without limit. *Eternal* means extending without end of time. Imagine such a gift and power!

The prophet Alma explains that the Atonement not only enables us to be forgiven of our sins. He teaches that through repentance, the Savior “will take upon him the *pains and the sicknesses* of his people. . . . he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death. . . . he will take upon him their *infirmities*, . . . [and] take upon him the sins of his people” (Alma 7:11–13; emphasis added). The Atonement extends well beyond the sinner to include those who suffer pains, sicknesses, and infirmities because of someone else’s sin.

The Atonement can help victims of sin in many ways. Sometimes the Atonement gives us strength to bear



To those injured by others, to those who suffer through no fault of their own, to those who are afflicted in any manner, the blessings of the Atonement are available to you—infinite and eternal.

our burdens. The people of Alma experienced this when they had heavy burdens placed on them by a wicked king. After they prayed to the Lord, He promised that, “I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs . . . that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions” (Mosiah 24:14). While the Atonement does not remove all burdens, it can increase our ability to bear them.

At other times, the Savior provides us with spiritual and emotional comfort. The Savior taught, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4; see also 3 Nephi 12:4). He is ready to comfort our anguish and wipe away our tears. Through the Atonement, the Savior can also speak peace to our souls. The Savior is known as The Prince of Peace (see 2 Nephi 19:6; Isaiah 9:6). He promises to give us peace that our

hearts might not be troubled or afraid (see John 14:27).

Of course, sometimes the Atonement is able to completely heal us. When the Savior visited the Americas after His Resurrection, He asked those who “were afflicted in any manner” be brought to Him (3 Nephi 17:9). He then healed them “every one”—without condition, without payment, without requirement. Sometimes He is able to heal us directly, taking away physical, emotional, or even spiritual afflictions as a kind gift from a loving Savior.

Victims of sin may access the blessings of the Atonement in the same way sinners do. They need only follow the Savior’s direction to “come unto me” and “learn of me.” As the “learn of him,” they too must then be willing to lay down the burdens they carry—often burdens of bitterness, anger, self-doubt, fear, and hate. We “come to Him” in many ways. We come to Him in personal prayer as the people of Alma did. We come to Him when we read about Him and His teachings in the scriptures. We come to Him when we attend church and listen to inspired talks given by our leaders and friends. We come to Him when we serve others, either in our callings or through simple acts of kindness and charity.

Perhaps we most easily come to Him when we partake of the sacrament each week. In that special moment as we partake of the bread and water, we are reminded of Him

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and of His Atonement. As we partake of the bread, we think of His bruised and broken body. We remember the pains and afflictions that He suffered for us. As we drink the cup of water, we remember the cool, cleansing, and healing power of His Atonement. We remember how it not only washes away sins from the sinner but also strengthens, comforts, brings peace to, and heals those suffering from the burdens of others' sins. We are reminded that we can always have His Spirit to be with us.

The wonderful nurse found the strength to set down her burden of anger by genuinely forgiving the young man. She drew closer to the Lord at this difficult time through her prayers and the prayers of others on her behalf. She returned to a life filled with service, helping heal the sick, giving her handmade clothing to the poor, working on holidays so that others could enjoy being home with their families, and performing many other acts of kindness. The Savior's Atonement did not heal her completely but brought peace to her soul and gave her strength to withstand the pain and discomfort of a body that will never completely heal.

To those injured by others, to those who suffer through no fault of their own, to those who are afflicted in any manner, the blessings of the Atonement are available to you— infinite and eternal. ■

“Behold, I have come unto the world . . . to save the world from sin”

(3 Nephi 9:21)

By **Samson Putturaj**

India pages, *Liahona* content editor

“Behold, I have come unto the world . . . to save the world from sin” (3 Nephi 9:21), declared Jesus Christ. His coming into the world was to save the people living in this world. His coming helped people overcome the physical and spiritual death through His Atonement. The Atonement forms a significant part of His coming to help us overcome the effects of physical and spiritual death. The Atonement is balm to help us have peace in this world. To better understand the Atonement, I refer to a talk by President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015), President of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles, to help our understanding.

President Packer gave the following illustration to show how Christ's Atonement makes it possible to be saved from sin if we do our part.

“Let me tell you a story—a parable.

“There once was a man who wanted something very much. It seemed more important than anything else in his life. In order for him to have his desire, he incurred a great debt.

“He had been warned about going into that much debt, and



Boyd K. Packer
(1924–2015)

“What is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal” (Moroni 7:41).

particularly about his creditor. But it seemed so important for him to do what he wanted to do and to have what he wanted right now. He was sure he could pay for it later.

“So he signed a contract. He would pay it off some time along the way. He didn’t worry too much about it, for the due date seemed such a long time away. He had what he wanted now, and that was what seemed important.

“The creditor was always somewhere in the back of his mind, and he made token payments now and again, thinking somehow that the day of reckoning really would never come.

“But as it always does, the day came, and the contract fell due. The debt had not been fully paid. His creditor appeared and demanded payment in full.

“Only then did he realize that his creditor not only had the power to repossess all that he owned, but the power to cast him into prison as well.

“I cannot pay you, for I have not the power to do so,’ he confessed.

“Then,’ said the creditor, ‘we will exercise the contract, take your possessions, and you shall go to prison. You agreed to that. It was your choice. You signed the contract, and now it must be enforced.’

“Can you not extend the time or forgive the debt?’ the debtor begged. ‘Arrange some way for me to keep what I have and not go to prison. Surely you believe in mercy? Will you not show mercy?’

“The creditor replied, ‘Mercy is always so one-sided. It would serve only you. If I show mercy to you, it will leave me unpaid. It is justice I demand. Do you believe in justice?’

“I believed in justice when I signed the contract,’ the debtor said. ‘It was on my side then, for I thought it would protect me. I did not need mercy then, nor think I should need it ever. Justice, I thought, would serve both of us equally as well.’

“It is justice that demands that you pay the contract or suffer the penalty,’ the creditor replied. ‘That is the law. You have agreed to it and that is the way it must be. Mercy cannot rob justice.’

“There they were: One meting out justice, the other pleading for mercy. Neither could prevail except at the expense of the other.

“If you do not forgive the debt there will be no mercy,’ the debtor pleaded.

“If I do, there will be no justice,’ was the reply.

“Both laws, it seemed, could not be served. They are two eternal ideals that appear to contradict one another. Is there no way for justice to be fully served, and mercy also?

“There is a way! The law of justice *can* be fully satisfied and mercy *can* be fully extended—but it takes someone else. And so it happened this time.

“The debtor had a friend. He came to help. He knew the debtor well. He knew him to be shortsighted. He

thought him foolish to have gotten himself into such a predicament. Nevertheless, he wanted to help because he loved him. He stepped between them, faced the creditor, and made this offer.

“I will pay the debt if you will free the debtor from his contract so that he may keep his possessions and not go to prison.’

“As the creditor was pondering the offer, the mediator added, ‘You demanded justice. Though he cannot pay you, I will do so. You will have been justly dealt with and can ask no more. It would not be just.’

“And so the creditor agreed.

“The mediator turned then to the debtor. ‘If I pay your debt, will you accept me as your creditor?’

“‘Oh yes, yes,’ cried the debtor. ‘You save me from prison and show mercy to me.’

“Then,’ said the benefactor, ‘you will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible. I will provide a way. You need not go to prison.’

“And so it was that the creditor was paid in full. He had been justly dealt with. No contract had been broken. The debtor, in turn, had been extended mercy. Both laws stood fulfilled. Because there was a mediator, justice had claimed its full share, and mercy was fully satisfied” (“The Mediator,” in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, 79–80; or *Ensign*, May 1977, 54–55). ■

Lifted Up by the Atonement

By Arul Kumar, Coimbatore, India

One of my juniors in my college was a returned missionary, Prince Selvaraj. He introduced the Book of Mormon to me and invited me to a Christmas celebration where he gave me a copy of the *Ensign* magazine. As I read through the magazine, I felt good. I wanted to experience that good feeling again and again. So I started going to church.

After I was baptized, my testimony continued to grow by leaps and bounds, and it is still being strengthened. I am especially humbled as well as happy to have gained a testimony of Jesus Christ as the only Begotten Son of God, my Savior and Redeemer; the indispensability of an infinite Atonement; and the truth that justice prevails (see Alma 42:25).

Primarily, the love of God has helped me become a strong member of the Church. Especially, whenever I fell, I was lifted up by my Church leaders who helped me go forward by their love and by the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The truth that sincere repentance and faith in Jesus Christ can cleanse a human from his or

her weaknesses and sins has made me strong. Also, the good feeling that comes when we serve the Lord and our fellow beings has strengthened me. Many members and friends, through their examples, have taught me what loyalty, obedience, integrity, forgiveness, and hope are, and these attributes have strengthened me. More importantly, my family has strengthened me to be a strong member, especially whenever they ask for a priesthood blessing.

My experience has taught me great lessons. I would like to share a few thoughts which can help youngsters and new converts:

1. Fear God, not men.
2. Values are more beautiful than physical beauty.
3. Believe that the Atonement of Jesus Christ can change men.
4. It is an enthralling experience to feel that God loves you and speaks to you. Try it. Feel it. That's true happiness.
5. Never ever miss going to church on Sundays—all three hours.
6. Have hope. Justice will eventually prevail.



My growth in the gospel is influenced by two great people, whom I admire the most:

Modern—Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: When he was afflicted with cancer, he lost his hair and health, but he came to general conference and gave a talk on Jesus Christ and His Atonement. I can never forget that. I had always loved his language and his way of conveying deep doctrines.

Ancient—Abinadi in The Book of Mormon: What courage he had to stand for truth! He said he would not take back his words of truth and suffered death for the cause of truth (see Mosiah 17:9–10). I wish I had at least a modicum of that courage to stand for the truth.

My simple testimony is that I know the Atonement is true. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God loves us. ■

Clean Water Project: India

By Paul and Bonnie Evensen

"Thank you, thank you for the pure water," sang the beautiful women of the villages outside of Hyderabad in southern India. Dancing, singing, drumming came from excited people who were celebrating the opening ceremonies for the new reverse osmosis

clean water project. Five villages have the units installed, with 22 more being done in the coming weeks. It is a wonderful project by Latter-day Saint Charities.

The villagers were also welcoming dignitaries who had traveled to see the water project. P. Raja Shekar Reddy, the Special Secretary to the Chief Minister of Telagana, which is where the project was done, was in attendance. He is a member of the legislative assembly. He commented at each village gathering how thrilled he was to have LDS Charities give such wonderful support to the people. His words were



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generous and the villagers were grateful. The clean water project will provide reverse osmosis units to 27 villages, with some having two units due to the size of the village.

A total of 60,000 people will benefit from the filtered water.

“Thank you for giving us clean water,” said one woman. “I lost my hair carrying water on my head for many years. Now I don’t have to walk 5 kilometers (3 miles) and can have my water here.” She clapped her hands in joy. The Hyderabad Stake presidency also joined in the ceremonies.

The area has severely polluted groundwater that has resulted in deformities of many of the villagers. In the visits done by LDSC, several people complained of the pain in their bodies. Clean water brings hope that the children will not suffer. ■

“True, enduring happiness, with the accompanying strength, courage, and capacity to overcome the greatest difficulties, will come as you center your life in Jesus Christ”

(Elder Richard G. Scott [1928–2015] of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Atonement Can Secure Your Peace and Happiness,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2006, 41).

Chennai Relief Works

The basketball court of the Whitefield Branch was filled. If someone other than a Church member walked in, they would be puzzled and wonder if they were in the right place. The place looked like a downtown marketplace. There were families, youngsters, kids, sacks of rice, lentils, sugar, and cooking oil at different places. There were members, nonmembers, and unassuming ones who had come to help the people of Chennai. And no one person was idle. There was frenetic activity all around. All working at a frenzy pace to pack things for the relief of people in Chennai.

Chennai had the highest rainfall in over a century, causing unprecedented floods and devastating the city. The people suffered and longed for relief. The Latter-day Saint Charities took up the humanitarian services in quick time to rush essentials needed for relieving the hardships faced by the people.

15 tons of rice, 3 tons of lentils, 1 1/2 tons of sugar, 1 1/2 tons of salt, 1,500 packets of cooking oil, and 1,200 loaves of bread. This huge quantity had to be downloaded from trucks and packed. There were young and old who participated. Galvin T., age 12, carried two 25-pound (25 kg) bags on his back to unload food sacks.



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“Our Heavenly Father’s children are in need, and we are here to help them. Jesus said: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ (Matthew 25:40).”



Even the stake president was not left behind, as he too carried sacks.

Grace J., age 11, of Indiranagar Ward, traveled with her brother Kevin, age 14, on a bus. Both were there on Saturday, December 5, till 10:30 p.m. helping pack. The stake president had special mention of her in recognizing her contribution. When asked why she had come, her simple reply was, “I wanted to serve others in need.” A great answer from an 11-year-old who understood the purpose of service. And she was there the next day, Sunday, to lend her hand to the process of packing.

Meghan Wodsten was visiting India and this was her last week in India. Giving some time to this work of charity was worth time spent. “Providing a small bit of aid to those suffering in Chennai is truly a blessing. I feel honored to be a part of this service for the people of India. I know Heavenly Father is watching over all and will bless these people.”

“I feel good when I do this service. I know this food will reach to those in need, because they are my beloved brothers and sisters. May the Lord bless them,” said Joseph M.P., Whitefield Ward.

“I feel good to be part of it. Also feeling great about the Spirit present here. All are working hard with the Spirit in this cause to bless others. Everyone is blessed,” said Sheeba Anthony, Indiranagar Ward.

Stake president Sunderraj summed up the relief work by saying, “It is wonderful to see the members gathered in unity for this cause. Our Heavenly Father’s children are in need, and we are here to help them. Jesus said: ‘Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ (Matthew 25:40). I am grateful for the opportunity and members joining to help the people of Chennai.”

The relief truck left the Whitefield chapel Sunday night to deliver the materials to ADRA for distributing to the needy in Chennai. ■

“Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not.

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;

“But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I;

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—

“Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men”

(D&C 19:15-19).