

## *Teachings Concerning Physical Death*

### **An Appointed Time For Each To Die**

#### **D&C 42:43-48**

43 And whosoever among you are sick, and have not faith to be healed, but believe, shall be nourished with all tenderness, with herbs and mild food, and that not by the hand of an enemy.

44 And the elders of the church, two or more, shall be called, and shall pray for and lay their hands upon them in my name; and if they die they shall die unto me, and if they live they shall live unto me.

45 Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection.

46 And it shall come to pass that those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them;

47 And they that die not in me, wo unto them, for their death is bitter.

48 And again, it shall come to pass that he that hath faith in me to be healed, and is not appointed unto death, shall be healed.

#### **Harold B. Lee**

- Now, very clearly what the Lord has told us in those two verses is that there comes a time in the life of every person—no matter how righteous, even the Son of God, His chosen prophets—when, despite the faith of the individual, despite the prayers that have been offered, despite the blessings of those who bear the holy priesthood, it's as though the omnipotent power were saying, "Now, your faith to the contrary, this person has an appointment unto death." (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, p. 47)
- I know a father who lost his daughter, a mother of four or five children, and it was a long fight. I have never seen a father or mother who had greater devotion to a daughter, and as she sank into the shadows the father said, "I guess I failed. If I had faith, she would have gotten

well." The Lord said that "those who have faith in me shall be healed if they are not appointed unto death" (see D&C 42:48). That suggests that we are here filling a mission on earth. We can fail in our appointment, but if we live true, then we fulfill our mission. Now, if the Lord asks us, calls us to no greater calling, I ask you, Would any one of you want to remain here one hour more than the Lord wants you to live in mortality, if He had something else for you to do? Not if you are thinking right. You would want to answer the call of the Master, wouldn't you? (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, p. 48)

### **To Die Well**

#### **Sterling W. Sill**

Two of the most important events in life are birth and death. And what a thrilling thing it is to be well born, to have goodly parents and live in a godly home! But it may be even more important to die well. . . .

Sometimes we miss one of our best opportunities—to learn to die well—because we think of death as unpleasant. And because we don't like to think about unpleasant things, we sometimes close our minds and turn away our faces. But death doesn't cease to exist just because it is ignored. The ancient Egyptians had a much more logical way of handling this situation when on their great festive occasions they kept constantly on display before the revelers the skeleton of a dead man. That is, they held up this great image of death before themselves that each one might be continually and constantly reminded that some day he would die.

Now I don't want to frighten anyone unduly in this audience this morning, but I would like to point out as gently and as kindly as I can that someday this tremendously important experience of our mortal estate will come to its end. Someone has said that judging by the past there will be very few of us who get out of this world alive. From the very beginning of life, each one of us lives under an irrevocable,

unchangeable death sentence, with a guarantee that it will be carried out. The Lord has given us this maximum notice to enable us to adequately prepare for it. And one man indicated this certainty by an inscription on his tombstone saying, “I knew it would happen!” . . .

And it has been said that the most important event in life is death. We live to die and then we die to live. Death is a kind of graduation day for life. It is our only means of entrance to our eternal lives. And it seems to me to be a very helpful procedure to spend a little time preliving our death. That is, what kind of person would you like to be when the last hour of your life arrives?

The last hour is the key hour. That is the hour that judges all of the other hours. No one can tell whether or not his life has been successful until his last hour. As Sophocles said, “We must wait till evening to know how pleasant the day has been.”

What a thrilling experience that we may live well, enabling us to die well and then live with God in the celestial kingdom throughout eternity. (*Ensign*, Nov. 1976, pp. 46-48)

## **Death is Deliverance**

### **Harold B. Lee**

No man who is fit to live need fear to die. To one here in this life, death is often the most terrible thing we know, but when we have tasted its reality it will mean to us birth, deliverance, a new creation of ourselves. It will be what health is to a sick man, what home is to an exile, what the loved one given back is to the bereaved. As we draw near to it a solemn gladness should fill our hearts. (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, p. 44)

## **The Dead Are More Alive the Mortals**

### **Harold B. Lee**

We speak of the passing of a loved one here as death. What is the meaning of death? If death means insensibility to impressions round about us, then, as a matter of truth, we are more insensible and thus more dead than the deceased; for when we say he

died, it meant that his spiritual self took flight from his earthly body. It went “home,” in the language of the scriptures, to that God who gave it life. When we shall place in mother earth this afternoon these mortal remains, we’re not placing there that which was the living or spiritual part of the deceased; we shall bury only that which was of the earth. The spirit took its flight, and now has been able to view and see and know things far beyond our understanding. As a matter of truth, he is more alive than we are because he is more sensitive to things round about us. I have a firm conviction that the spirits of those who pass on who are righteous have a great influence upon [funeral] services of this kind, bringing to such services through those who perform on the program, if they are in tune therewith, the kind of sweetness of spirit, kindliness of council, forbearance, unselfishness, devotion—all those attributes all come seemingly back in the spirit of him who has passed through those who have been asked to sing and speak. (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, p. 45)

## **Do Not Cling Too Tenaciously To This Life**

### **Harold B. Lee**

Sometimes we fret with the things that life brings. One of our leaders said some while ago—he was failing in health, obviously, from the way he wrote—and he said, “It’s well that we have headaches, and backaches, and leg aches, and heartaches.” It’s well that we have these aches and pains to remind us that this isn’t the stopping place, and that we won’t cling too tenaciously to mortal life. (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, p. 48)

## **No Righteous Man is Ever Taken Before His Time**

### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

No righteous man is ever taken before his time. In the case of the faithful Saints, they are simply transferred to other fields of labor. The Lord’s work goes on in this life, in the world of spirits, and in the kingdoms of glory where men go after their

resurrection. (The funeral services of Elder Richard L. Evans, *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, p. 10)

## **Death of the Righteous is a Call to Work in the Spirit World**

### **Joseph F. Smith**

I beheld that the faithful elders of this dispensation, when they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the preaching of the gospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the spirits of the dead. (D&C 138:57)

### **Ezra Taft Benson**

The death of a righteous individual is both an honorable release and a call to new labors. (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p.33)

### **Neal A. Maxwell**

On the other side of the veil, there are perhaps seventy billion people. They need the same gospel, and releases occur here to aid the Lord's work there. Each release of a righteous individual from this life is also a call to new labors. Those who have true hope understand this.

Therefore, though we miss the departed righteous so much here, hundreds may feel their touch there. One day, those hundreds will thank the bereaved for gracefully forgoing the extended association with choice individuals here, in order that they could help hundreds there. In God's ecology, talent and love are never wasted. The hopeful understand this, too. (*Notwithstanding My Weakness*, p.55)

### **Wilford Woodruff**

- Perhaps I may be permitted to relate a circumstance with which I am acquainted in relation to Bishop Roskelley, of Smithfield, Cache Valley:

On one occasion he was suddenly taken very sick -- near to death's door. While he lay in this condition, President Peter Maughan, who was dead, came to him and said: "Brother Roskelley,

we held a council on the other side of the veil. I have had a great deal to do, and I have the privilege of coming here to appoint one man to come and help. I have had three names given to me in council, and you are one of them. I want to inquire into your circumstances.

The Bishop told him what he had to do, and they conversed together as one man would converse with another. President Maughan then said to him: "I think I will not call you. I think you are wanted here more than perhaps one of the others."

Bishop Roskelley got well from that hour. Very soon after, the second man was taken sick, but not being able to exercise sufficient faith, Brother Roskelley did not go to him. By and by this man recovered, and on meeting Brother Roskelley, he said: "brother Maughan came to me the other night and told me he was sent to call one man from the ward," and he named two men as had been done to Brother Roskelley. A few days afterwards the third man was taken sick and died.

Now, I name this to show a principle. They have work on the other side of the veil; and they want men, and they call them. And that was my view in regards to Brother George A. Smith. When he was almost at death's door, Brother Cannon administered to him, and in thirty minutes he was up and ate breakfast with his family. We labored with him in this way, but ultimately, as you know, he died. But it taught me a lesson. I felt that man was wanted behind the veil. We labored also with Brother Pratt; but he, too, was wanted behind the veil. (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, pp.290-291)

- We lost one of our apostles a short time since. He was about the youngest man in the quorum of the apostles. He was suddenly called away from us. There is a meaning to this. Many times things take place with us that we do not comprehend, unless it is given to us by revelation. But there is a meaning in the loss of that young apostle. I had a manifestation of that while in San Francisco recently.

One evening, as I fell asleep, I was very much troubled with evil spirits that tried to afflict me; and while laboring to throw off these spirits and

their influence, there was another spirit visited me that seemed to have power over the evil spirits, and they departed from me. Before he left me he told me not to grieve because of the departure of Abraham Hoagland Cannon; for the Lord had called him to fill another important mission in the spirit world, as a pure and holy apostle from Zion in the Rocky Mountains -- a labor which would not only prove a great benefit to his father's household, but to the Church and kingdom of God on the earth. I feel to name this, because it is true. I have become acquainted with many things in our history that I have marveled at. While in the St. George temple I had a son, who was in the north country, drowned. He had a warning of this. In a dream he was notified how he would die. We had testimony of that after his death. I asked the Lord why he was taken from me. The answer to me was, "You are doing a great deal for the redemption of your dead; but the law of redemption requires some of your own seed in the spirit world to attend to work connected with this." That was a new principle to me; but it satisfied me why he was taken away. I name this, because there are a great many instances like it among the Latter-day Saints. This was the case with Brother Abraham Cannon. He was taken away to fulfil that mission. And where we have anything of this kind, we should leave it in the hands of God to reconcile. (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, p.292)

## **Perfection Not Necessary To Die Unto the Lord**

**Bruce R. McConkie**

I shall speak of a subject which strikes dread—even terror—into the hearts of most men. It is something we fear, of which we are sorely afraid, and from which most of us would flee if we could.

I shall speak of the passing of the immortal soul into the eternal realms ahead, of that dread day when we shall shuffle off this mortal coil and go back to the dust from whence we came. I shall speak of death—mortal death, the natural death, the death of

the body—and of the state of the souls of men when this final consummation is imposed upon them. . . .

When the faithful saints depart from this life they "are received into a state of happiness, which is called paradise, a state of rest, a state of peace, where they shall rest from all their troubles and from all care, and sorrow" (Alma 40:12), and they remain in this state until the day of their resurrection.

When the wicked and ungodly depart from this life they continue in their wickedness and rebellion. "That same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time ye go out of this life," the scripture says, "that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world." (Alma 34:34.)

"Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ," Nephi said to members of the Church, "having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life." (2 Ne. 31:20.) That is to say--all the faithful Saints, all of those who have endured to the end, depart this life with the absolute guarantee of eternal life.

There is no equivocation, no doubt, no uncertainty in our minds. Those who have been true and faithful in this life will not fall by the wayside in the life to come. If they keep their covenants here and now and depart this life firm and true in the testimony of our blessed Lord, they shall come forth with an inheritance of eternal life.

We do not mean to say that those who die in the Lord, and who are true and faithful in this life, must be perfect in all things when they go into the next sphere of existence. There was only one perfect man--the Lord Jesus whose Father was God.

There have been many righteous souls who have attained relative degrees of perfection, and there have been great hosts of faithful people who have kept the faith, and lived the law, and departed this life with the full assurance of an eventual inheritance of eternal life.

There are many things they will do and must do, even beyond the grave, to merit the fulness of the Father's kingdom in that final glorious day when the great King shall say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. 25:34.)

But what we are saying is that when the saints of God chart a course of righteousness, when they gain sure testimonies of the truth and divinity of the Lord's work, when they keep the commandments, when they overcome the world, when they put first in their lives the things of God's kingdom: when they do all these things, and then depart this life--though they have not yet become perfect--they shall nonetheless gain eternal life in our Father's kingdom; and eventually they shall be perfect as God their Father and Christ His Son are perfect.

Is it any wonder that the scriptures say: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints"? (Ps. 116:15.) Truly such is precious, wondrous, and glorious, for when the saints die, added souls have assured themselves of exaltation with Him who provided the way for them to advance and progress and become like Him.

Is it any wonder that the scriptures say: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," for they shall "rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13.) Truly it is a blessed occasion, for the faithful saints have filled the full measure of their creation, and a gracious God will give them all things in due course.

Is it any wonder that the Lord says to His saints, "Those that die in me shall not taste of death, for it shall be sweet unto them"? (D&C 42:46.)

Is it any wonder that the Prophet Joseph Smith said such things as: "When men are prepared, they are better off to go hence"? (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 326.)

"Those who have died in Jesus Christ may expect to enter into all that fruition of joy when they come forth, which they possessed or anticipated here." (*Teachings*, p. 295.) [*Ensign*, Nov. 1976, pp. 105-106]