

# Teachings Concerning *The Atonement of Jesus Christ*

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“Christ’s Atonement, of course, is for super sinners and the midrange sinners and then good people who make a lot of mistakes but are not wicked!”

Neal A. Maxwell

“The Holy Ghost: Glorifying Christ,” *Ensign*, July 2002, p.56

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## *What is the Atonement?*

### **Bruce R. McConkie**

The atonement is the most transcendent event that ever has occurred or ever will occur from creation’s morn through all the endless ages of eternity. It is the occasion on which a God paid the ransom to reclaim fallen man, and all created things, from the effects of Adam’s fall. In it, Jesus Christ, who became the first immortal flesh, paid the penalty for the transgression of the First Adam who was the first mortal flesh. In it, the Only Begotten made amends for a broken law, satisfied

the demands of justice, and took upon himself the sins of all men on conditions of repentance. Through it, all men are raised in immortality while those who believe and obey are raised also unto eternal life in the kingdom of the Father. The atonement makes possible a reconciliation between God and man; it provides a Savior and a Redeemer for mortals; it gives man an advocate and an intercessor in the courts above. The atonement is the great and eternal plan of redemption. (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, p.107)

## *Meaning of the Word “Atonement”*

### **James E. Talmage**

Through the atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ—a redeeming service, vicariously rendered in behalf of mankind, all of whom have become estranged from God by the effects of sin both inherited and individually incurred—the way is opened for a reconciliation whereby man may come again into communion with God, and be made fit to dwell anew and forever in the presence of his Eternal Father. This basal thought is admirably implied in our English word, “atonement,” which, as its syllables attest, is at-one-ment, “denoting reconciliation, or the bringing into agreement of those who have been estranged.” (*Jesus the Christ*, p.23)

### **Boyd K. Packer**

Atonement is really three words: At-one-ment, meaning to set at one, one with God; to reconcile, to conciliate, to expiate. (“Atonement, Agency, Accountability,” *Ensign*, May 1988, p. 69)

### **Russell M. Nelson**

... let us now ponder the deep meaning of the word *atonement*. In the English language, the components are *at-one-ment*, suggesting that a person is at one with another. Other languages [such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and German] employ words that connote either *expiation* or *reconciliation*. Expiation means “to atone for.” Reconciliation comes from Latin roots *re*, meaning “again”; *con*, meaning “with”; and *sella*, meaning “seat.” Reconciliation, therefore, literally means “to sit again with.”

Rich meaning is found in study of the word *atonement* in the Semitic languages of Old Testament times. In Hebrew, the basic word for atonement is *kaphar*, a verb that means “to cover” or “to forgive.” [We might even surmise that if an individual qualifies for the blessings of the Atonement (through obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel), Jesus will “cover” our past transgressions from the Father.] Closely related is the Aramaic and Arabic word *kafat*, meaning “a close embrace”—no doubt related to the Egyptian ritual embrace. References to that embrace are evident in

the Book of Mormon. One states that “the Lord hath redeemed my soul ... ; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love” [2 Ne. 1:15]. Another proffers the glorious hope of our being “clasped in the arms of Jesus” [Morm. 5:11; additional examples are in Alma 5:33; Alma 34:16].

I weep for joy when I contemplate the significance

of it all. To be redeemed is to be atoned – received in the close embrace of God with an expression not only of His forgiveness, but of our oneness of heart and mind. What a privilege! And what a comfort to those of us with loved ones who have already passed from our family circle through the gateway we call death! (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 34)

## *The Need for an Atonement*

### **D&C 20**

17 By these things we know that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them;

18 And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them;

19 And gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship.

20 But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man.

21 Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him.

### **2 Nephi 2**

5 And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the law is given unto men. And by the law no flesh is justified; or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the temporal law they were cut off; and also, by the spiritual law they perish from that which is good, and become miserable forever.

### **Alma 22**

12 And it came to pass that when Aaron saw that the king would believe his words, he began from the creation of Adam, reading the scriptures unto the king—how God created man after his own image, and that God gave him commandments, and that because of transgression, man had fallen.

13 And Aaron did expound unto him the scriptures from the creation of Adam, laying the fall of man before him, and their carnal state and also the plan of redemption, which was prepared from the foundation of the world, through Christ, for all whosoever would believe on his name.

14 And since man had fallen he could not merit

anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth.

### **1 Nephi 10**

5 And he also spake concerning the prophets, how great a number had testified of these things, concerning this Messiah, of whom he had spoken, or this Redeemer of the world.

6 Wherefore, all mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be save they should rely on this Redeemer.

### **Mormon 9**

12 Behold he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man.

13 And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord ...

### **Brigham Young**

A divine debt has been contracted by the children, and the Father demands recompense. He says to his children on this earth, who are in sin and transgression, it is impossible for you to pay this debt; I will send my Only Begotten Son to pay this divine debt. .... [U]nless God provides a Savior to pay this debt it can never be paid. Can all the wisdom of the world devise means by which we can be redeemed, and return to the presence of our Father and Elder Brother, and dwell with holy angels and celestial beings? No; it is beyond the power and wisdom of the inhabitants of the earth that now live, or that ever did or ever will live, to prepare or create a sacrifice that will pay this divine debt. But God provided it, and his Son has paid it, and we, each and every one, can now receive the truth and be saved in the Kingdom of God. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.59)

## *Justice, Mercy, and the Atonement*

### *Man is Subject to Demands of Justice*

#### **Alma 42**

12 And now, there was no means to reclaim men from this fallen state, which man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience;

14 And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence.

#### **Richard G. Scott**

Every incorrect choice we make, every sin we commit is a violation of eternal law. That violation brings negative results we generally soon recognize. There are also other consequences of our acts of which we may not be conscious. They are nonetheless real. They can have a tremendous effect on the quality of our life here and most certainly will powerfully affect it hereafter. We can do nothing of ourselves to satisfy the demands of justice for a broken eternal law. Yet, unless the demands of justice are paid, each of us will suffer endless negative consequences. Only the life, teachings, and particularly the atonement of Jesus Christ can release us from this otherwise impossible predicament. Each of us has made mistakes, large or small, which if unresolved will keep us from the presence of God. ("Finding Forgiveness," *Ensign*, May 1995, p. 75)

### *Atonement Secures the Plan of Mercy*

#### **Alma 42**

15 And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.

16 Now, repentance could not come unto men except there were a punishment, which also was eternal as the life of the soul should be, affixed opposite to the plan of happiness, which was as eternal also as the life of the soul.

17 Now, how could a man repent except he should sin? How could he sin if there was no law? How could there be a law save there was a punishment?

18 Now, there was a punishment affixed, and a just law given, which brought remorse of conscience unto man.

19 Now, if there was no law given--if a man murdered he should die--would he be afraid he would die if he should murder?

20 And also, if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin.

21 And if there was no law given, if men sinned what could justice do, or mercy either, for they would have no claim upon the creature?

22 But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

23 But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.

24 For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved.

#### **Mosiah 15**

26 But behold, and fear, and tremble before God, for ye ought to tremble; for the Lord redeemeth none such that rebel against him and die in their sins; yea, even all those that have perished in their sins ever since the world began, that have wilfully rebelled against God, that have known the commandments of God, and would not keep them; these are they that have no part in the first resurrection.

27 Therefore ought ye not to tremble? For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim. (emphasis added)

### *Christ's Atonement (Mercy) Satisfies Justice*

#### **Mosiah 15**

1 And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people.

2 And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father ...

5 And thus the flesh becoming subject to the Spirit, or the Son to the Father, being one God, suffereth temptation, and yieldeth not to the temptation, but suffereth himself to be mocked, and scourged, and cast out, and disowned by his people.

6 And after all this, after working many mighty miracles among the children of men, he shall be led, yea, even as Isaiah said, as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

7 Yea, even so he shall be led, crucified, and slain, the flesh becoming subject even unto death, the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father.

8 And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—

9 Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.

#### **Alma 34**

9 For it is expedient that an atonement should be made; for according to the great plan of the Eternal God there must be an atonement made, or else all mankind must unavoidably perish; yea, all are hardened; yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement which it is expedient should be made.

10 For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. ...

13 Therefore, it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice, and then shall there be, or it is expedient there should be, a stop to the shedding of blood; then shall the law of Moses be fulfilled; yea, it shall be all fulfilled, every jot and tittle, and none shall have passed away.

14 And behold, this is the whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice; and that great and last sacrifice will be the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal.

15 And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have faith unto repentance.

16 And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he

that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

#### *Mercy--the Counterbalance to Justice* (Two Discussions on Justice, Mercy, and the Atonement)

#### **Dallin H. Oaks**

*Justice* has many meanings. One is balance. A popular symbol of justice is scales in balance. Thus, when the laws of man have been violated, justice usually requires that a punishment be imposed, a penalty that will restore the balance.

People generally feel that justice has been done when an offender receives what he deserves—when the punishment fits the crime. The Church’s declaration of belief state that “the commission of crime should be punished [under the laws of man] according to the nature of the offense” (D&C 134:8). The paramount concern of human law is justice.

Unlike the changeable laws of man, the laws of God are fixed and permanent, “irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world” (D&C 130:20). These laws of God are likewise concerned with justice. The idea of justice as what one deserves is the fundamental premise of all scriptures that speak of men’s being judged according to their works. Alma declared that it was “requisite with the justice of God that men should be judged according to their works” (Alma 41:3). The Savior told the Nephites that all men would stand before Him to be “judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil” (3 Nephi 27:14). In his letter to the Romans, Paul described “the righteous judgment of God” in terms of “render[ing] to every man according to his deeds” (Romans 2:5-6).

According to eternal law, the consequences that follow from the justice of God are severe and permanent. When a commandment is broken, a commensurate penalty is imposed. This happens automatically. Punishments prescribed by the laws of man only follow the judge’s action, but under the laws of God the consequences and penalties of sin are inherent in the act. “There is a law given, and a punishment affixed,” the prophet Alma taught, and “justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment.” Alma explained, “And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence” (Alma 42:22, 14). Abinadi added that the Lord “cannot deny justice when it has its claim” (Mosiah 15:27). By itself, justice

is uncompromising.

The justice of God holds each of us responsible for our own transgressions and automatically imposes the penalty. This reality should permeate our understanding, and it should influence all our teachings about the commandments of God and the effect of individual transgressions.

In keeping with the legal traditions of man, many seem to want justice. It is true that justice is a friend that will protect us from persecution by the enemies of righteousness. But justice will also see that we receive what we deserve, and this is an outcome I fear. I cannot achieve my eternal goals on the basis of what I deserve. Though I try with all my might, I am still what King Benjamin called an “unprofitable servant” (Mosiah 2:21). To achieve my eternal goals, I need more than I deserve. I need more than justice.

This realization reminds me of an event that occurred in the law firm where I began practicing law more than forty years ago. A Chicago politician had been indicted for stuffing ballot boxes. A partner in our firm told me how this politician came to his office to ask us to represent him in his criminal trial.

“What can you do for me?” he asked. Our partner replied that if this client retained our firm to conduct his defense, we would investigate the facts, research the law, and present the defense at the trial. “In this way,” the lawyer concluded, “we will get you a fair trial.”

The politician promptly stood up, put on his hat, and stalked out of the office. Pursuing him down the hall, the lawyer asked what he had said to offend him. “Nothing,” the politician replied. “Then why are you leaving?” the lawyer asked. “The odds aren’t good enough,” the politician answered.

The man would not retain our firm to represent him in court because we would only promise him a fair trial, and he knew he needed more than that. He knew he was guilty, and he could only be saved from prison by something more favorable to him than justice.

Can justice save us? Can man in and of himself overcome the spiritual death all mankind suffers from the Fall, which we bring upon ourselves anew by our own sinful acts? No! Can we “work out our own salvation”? Never! “By the law no flesh is justified,” Lehi explained (2 Nephi 2:5). “Salvation doth not come by the law alone,” Abinadi warned (Mosiah 13:28). Shakespeare had one of his characters declare this truth: “In the course of justice, none of us should see salvation: we do pray for mercy” (*The Merchant of Venice*, act 4, scene 1, lines 196-197).

We know from numerous scriptures that “no unclean thing” can enter “the kingdom of God” (Moses 6:57; 1

Nephi 10:21; Alma 40:26). If we are to return to the presence of our Heavenly Father, we need the intervention of some powerful influence that transcends justice. That powerful intervention is the atonement of Jesus Christ.

The good news of the gospel is that because of the atonement of Jesus Christ there is something called *mercy*. *Mercy* signifies an advantage greater than what we deserve. This could come by the withholding of a deserved punishment or by the granting of an undeserved benefit.

If justice is balance, then mercy is counterbalance. If justice is exactly what we deserve, then mercy is *more* benefit than we deserve. In its relationship to justice and mercy, the Atonement is the means by which justice is served and mercy is extended. In combination, justice and mercy and the Atonement constitute the glorious eternal wholeness of the justice and mercy of God.

Mercy has several different manifestations in connection with our redemption. The universal resurrection from physical death is an unconditional act of mercy made possible by the Atonement. Alma taught Corianton that “mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead” (Alma 42:23).

A second effect of the Atonement concerns our redemption from spiritual death. We are redeemed from the fall of Adam without condition. We are redeemed from the effects of our personal sins on condition of our obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel.

Justice is served and mercy is extended by the suffering and shed blood of Jesus Christ. The Messiah “offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law” (2 Nephi 2:7; Romans 5:18-19). In this way, “God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15).

We are all dependent upon the mercy of God the Father extended to all mankind through the atoning sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is the central reality of the gospel. This is why we “talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

The reality of our total dependence upon Jesus Christ for the attainment of our goals of immortality and eternal life should dominate every teaching and every testimony and every action of every soul touched by the light of the restored gospel. If we teach every other subject and principle with perfection and fall short on this one, we have failed in our most important mission.

(From “Sins, Crimes, and Atonement,” in *With Full Purpose of Heart* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002], pp. 113-131)

### Jeffrey R. Holland

This loving, charitable, and merciful generosity of the Savior raises the inevitable question of the place of justice in his working out of the Atonement. The balance between seemingly contradictory principles is examined in the Book of Mormon most skillfully and—because it is a father speaking to his own transgressing son—most sensitively by Alma the Younger when instructing his son Corianton.

Obviously the demands of justice require that penalties must be paid for violation of the law. Adam transgressed and so have all of us; thus the judgment of death (physically) and the consequences of hell (spiritually) is pronounced as a just reward. Furthermore, once guilty, none of us could personally do anything to overcome that fate. We do not have in us the seeds of immortality allowing us to conquer death physically, and we have not been perfect in our behavior, thus forfeiting the purity that would let us return to the presence of God spiritually. Furthermore, God cannot simply turn a blind eye to the breaking of divine law, because in so doing he would dishonor justice and would “cease to be God,” (see Alma 42:13, 22, 25) which thing he would never do. The sorry truth for mortal men and women was, then, that “there was no means to reclaim [them] from this fallen state which man had brought upon himself because of his own disobedience.

“Thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence” (Alma 42:14; see also v. 12).

The claims of justice must be honored. The absence of law or the lack of any penalty for breaking it would leave the world in amoral chaos. Alma asked rhetorically, “If there was no law given—if a man murdered he should die—would he be afraid he would die if he should murder? And also, if there was no law given against sin men would not be afraid to sin” (Alma 42:19-20). Clearly one of the purposes of law and the firm demands of justice behind it is its preventive impact.

But what happens when *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God? How do we overcome the infinite impact of Adam’s transgression? How is the price to be paid for every sin and sorrow and selfish thought that men and women have experienced from Adam to the end of the world? The number of transgressors is as vast as the punishment is ominous.

“Do ye suppose that mercy can rob justice?” Alma asked. “I say unto you, Nay; not one whit” (Alma 32:25).

King Benjamin had earlier reminded his people: “After ye have known and have been taught all these things, if ye should transgress and go contrary to that which has been spoken, that ye do withdraw yourselves from the Spirit of the Lord, that it may have no place in you to guide you in wisdom’s paths that ye may be blessed, prospered, and preserved—

“I say unto you, that the man that doeth this, the same cometh out in open rebellion against God. . . . If that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever.

“And now I say unto you, that mercy hath no claim on that man; therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment” (Mosiah 2:36-39).

Usually when we speak of the atonement of Christ, we emphasize (or find ourselves hoping for) the merciful aspects of that gift. But we must always remember that the Atonement carries with it the unfailing elements of justice as well. Justice *is* the gulf separating the wicked from the righteous, and “justice cannot be denied” (Jacob 6:10; see also 1 Nephi 2:18). Christ did all that he did so that “a righteous judgment might come upon the children of men.” It is a *righteous* judgment, but it *is* a judgment.

To the resistant congregation at Ammonihah, Amulek powerfully taught the justice of the Resurrection—that “the wicked remain as though there had been no redemption made, except it be the loosing of the bands of death,” and they shall be “arraigned before the bar of Christ the Son, and God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, which is one Eternal God, to be judged according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil” (Mosiah 3:10; Alma 11:41, 44). Upon hearing that doctrine, Zeezrom, the chief antagonist in that setting, “began to tremble under a consciousness of his guilt.” When Alma stepped in to reinforce the words of Amulek on this doctrine, Zeezrom “began to tremble more exceedingly, for he was convinced more and more of the [justice] of God” (Alma 12:1,7).

An earlier prophet also thought someone in his audience should be alarmed at the justice of God. Abinadi asked King Noah (who displayed much the same spirit Zeezrom had initially shown), “Ought ye not to tremble? For salvation cometh to none such; for the Lord

hath redeemed none such; yea, neither can the Lord redeem such; for he cannot deny himself; for he cannot deny justice when it has its claim” (Mosiah 15:27).

It is Book of Mormon doctrine that God must be just (see Alma 42:13, 22, 25). Furthermore, the guilty will, even in everlasting shame, acknowledge that “all his judgments are just; that he is just in all his works” (Alma 12:15). But God is a merciful God also, and so is the Son of God. Therefore, God devised a “plan of mercy” (Alma 42:15) that would satisfy the demands of justice and free those held hostage to sin. It would require that a God himself come to earth to atone for the sins of the world, a point that Abinadi made not once but three times in declaring the Atonement to King Noah and his wicked priests (see Mosiah 13:28, 34; 15:1).

No mere mortal could work such a miracle or bear such a weighty load. As Amulek taught, “There is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another” (Alma 34:11). In such an earthly accounting, any mortals, however good they might wish to be, would have their own sins to account for, so they would hardly be in a position to take care of another’s. And regarding death, no mortals, however strong they might be otherwise, carry in themselves the seeds of life whereby they can raise themselves—let alone others—from the tomb.

No, only a God (the Son) could meet these demands and thereby help another God (the Father) “be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15). Only a God himself would bear the seeds of divinity, the seeds of eternal life, that would allow a triumph over death. And only a person qualifying to be a God could live in a world of temptation and be subject to all the ills of the flesh but never yield to them.

So Christ came to earth, lived his thirty-three years, then fulfilled the ultimate purpose for his birth into mortality. In a spiritual agony that began in Gethsemane and a physical payment that was consummated on the cross of Calvary, he took upon himself every sin and sorrow, every heartache and infirmity, every sickness, sadness, trial, and tribulation experienced by the children of God from Adam to the end of the world. How he did that is a stunning mystery, but he did it. He broke the bands of physical death and gained victory over the grasp of spiritual hell. A God himself came down and made merciful intercession for all the children of men (see Mosiah 15:8).

Through his personal experience Alma came to appreciate that only with such mercy included could the great plan of redemption function. As he later taught his son Corianton, “According to justice, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, [except] on

conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, mercy could not take effect except it should destroy the work of justice. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God. And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, the justice of God, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence. . . .

“But there is a law given, and a punishment affixed, and a repentance granted; which repentance, mercy claimeth; otherwise, justice claimeth the creature and executeth the law, and the law inflicteth the punishment; if not so, the works of justice would be destroyed, and God would cease to be God.

“But God ceaseth not to be God, and mercy claimeth the penitent, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.

“For behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved” (Alma 42:13-14, 22-24).

As he ascended into heaven, Christ did so “having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion towards the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice” (Mosiah 15:9). It is a matter of surpassing wonder that the voluntary and merciful sacrifice of a single being could satisfy the infinite and eternal demands of justice, atone for every human transgression and misdeed ever committed in the history of the world, and provide for the sweeping of all mankind into the encompassing arms of God’s compassionate embrace—but that is what happened. (*Christ and the New Covenant: The Messianic Message of the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], pp. 225-229)

### *Justice, Mercy, and Atonement—A Parable*

#### **Boyd K. Packer**

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 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.

Each of us lives on a kind of spiritual credit. One day the account will be closed, a settlement demanded. However casually we may view it now, when that day comes and the foreclosure is imminent, we will look around in restless agony for someone, anyone, to help us.

And, by eternal law, mercy cannot be extended save there be one who is both willing and able to assume our debt and pay the price and arrange the terms for our redemption.

Unless there is a mediator, unless we have a friend, the full weight of justice untempered, unsympathetic, must, positively must fall on us. The full recompense for every transgression, however minor or however deep, will be exacted from us to the uttermost farthing.

But know this: Truth, glorious truth, proclaims there is such a Mediator.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 2:5.)

Through Him mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice. ("The Mediator," *Ensign*, May 1977, pp. 54-56)



## Teachings Regarding the Scriptural Account of Christ's Atonement

### D&C 20

20 But by the transgression of these holy laws man became sensual and devilish, and became fallen man.

21 Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, *as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him. (emphasis added)*

### *The Ordeal of the Atonement as Recorded in the Scriptures*

[The following is a discussion of the ordeal of the atonement as found in the scriptures.]

### Neal A. Maxwell

The Atonement is the chief expression of Christ's loving-kindness. He endured so many things. For instance, as prophesied, He was spat upon (see 1 Ne. 19:9). As foretold, He was struck and scourged (see Mosiah 3:9). Likewise, He was offered vinegar and gall while aflame with thirst (see Ps. 69:21).

Yet in His later description of His agonies, Jesus does not speak of those things. Instead, after the Atonement, there is no mention about His being spat upon, struck, or proffered vinegar and gall. Instead, Christ confides in us His chief anxiety, namely, that He "would that [He] might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink" (D&C 19:18)—especially desiring not to get partway through the Atonement and then pull back. Mercifully for all of us, He "finished [His] preparations unto the children of men" (D&C 19:19). Jesus partook of history's bitterest cup without becoming bitter! Significantly, when He comes again in majesty and power, He will cite His aloneness, saying, "I have trodden the wine-press alone" (D&C 133:50).

The Book of Mormon describes Jesus' Atonement as the "infinite atonement" (Alma 34:12); it certainly required infinite suffering. When suffering and burdened Jesus entered Gethsemane, He "fell on the ground" (Mark 14:35). He did not merely kneel down, pray intensely and briefly, and leave. His agonies were so great that He began to bleed at every one of thousands of His pores (see D&C 19:18). An angel, whose identity we do not know, came to strengthen Him (see Luke 22:43). Mark wrote that Jesus became "sore amazed" and "very heavy" (Mark 14:33), meaning in the Greek, respectively, "astonished and awestruck" and "depressed and dejected." None of us can tell Christ anything about depression!

In the course of that great prayer, He pled with the Father in the most intimate and familial of terms, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). This was not theater but real pleading to a loving Father from a suffering Son in the deepest possible distress!

In the Atonement Jesus experienced what He later described as "the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (D&C 76:107; D&C 88:106). We can't even begin to imagine what it would have been like as He stood in our places and paid the price for our sins.

Though sinless Himself, He bore the sins of billions. Thus His empathy and mercy became fully perfected and personalized. Indeed, He thus "descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things" (D&C 88:6; see also 122:8).

He was scourged, most likely with a Roman flagellum of several thongs; at the end of each were sharp objects designed to tear the flesh. His tensed back muscles would have been torn. If he was struck with the usual number of blows, 39, the first blows would have bruised and the last blows would have shredded His flesh. Believing Christian physicians wrote that, medically speaking, Jesus would have been in serious, if not critical, medical condition because of the loss of blood; and, as we know by revelation, He had previously bled from every pore in the Garden of Gethsemane (see William D. Edwards, Wesley J. Gabel, Floyd E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 21 Mar. 1986, vol. 255, no. 11, 1458).

The divine reproach Jesus felt so exquisitely, because of His meekly standing in for us, fulfilled yet another prophecy: "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (Ps. 69:20). His heart was broken, as He did "suffer both body and spirit" (D&C 19:18). He trembled because of pain, and yet He, amidst profound aloneness, finished His preparations, bringing to pass the unconditional immortality of all mankind and "eternal life" for all those who would keep His commandments (Moses 1:39).

At the apogee of His agony, Jesus uttered on the cross the great soul cry of forsakenness: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). President Young's insight helps us understand His

aloneness, which was a unique dimension of His agony:

“At the very moment, at the hour when the crisis came for him to offer up his life, the Father withdrew Himself, withdrew His Spirit, and cast a veil over [Jesus]. That is what made him sweat blood. If he had had the power of God upon him, he would not have sweat blood; but all was withdrawn from him, and a veil was cast over him, and he then plead with the Father not to forsake him” (in *Journal of Discourses*, 3:206).

When Jesus comes in overwhelming majesty and power, in at least one of His appearances He will come in red attire, reminding us that He shed His blood to atone for our sins (see D&C 133:48; Isa. 63:1). His voice will be heard to declare, again, how alone He once was: “I have trodden the wine-press alone ... and none were with me” (D&C 133:50).

The more we know of Jesus’ Atonement, the more we will humbly and gladly glorify Him, His Atonement, and His character. We will never tire of paying tribute to His goodness and loving-kindness. How long will we so speak of our gratitude for His Atonement? The scriptures advise “forever and ever”! (See D&C 133:52.) [“Enduring Well,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, p. 10]

### *Atonement Began in Gethsemane and Continued to the Cross*

#### **Spencer J. Condie**

The Atonement began in Gethsemane and continued on Golgotha until the Savior himself declared on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30). [“The Fall and Infinite Atonement,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1996, p. 24]

#### **James E. Talmage**

At the ninth hour, or about three in the afternoon, a loud voice, surpassing the most anguished cry of physical suffering issued from the central cross, rending the dreadful darkness. It was the voice of the Christ: “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” What mind of man can fathom the significance of that awful cry? It seems, that in addition to the fearful suffering incident to crucifixion, the agony of Gethsemane had recurred, intensified beyond human power to endure. In that bitterest hour the dying Christ was alone, alone in most terrible reality. That the supreme sacrifice of the Son might be consummated in all its fulness, the Father seems to have withdrawn the support of His immediate Presence, leaving to the Savior of men the glory of complete victory over the forces of sin and death. (*Jesus the Christ*, pp.660-661)

#### **Bruce R. McConkie**

Finally, on a hill called Calvary—again, it was outside Jerusalem’s walls—while helpless disciples looked on and felt the agonies of near death in their own bodies, the Roman soldiers laid him upon the cross.

With great mallets they drove spikes of iron through his feet and hands and wrists. Truly he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.

Then the cross was raised that all might see and gape and curse and deride. This they did, with evil venom, for three hours from 9:00 A.M. to noon.

Then the heavens grew black. Darkness covered the land for the space of three hours, as it did among the Nephites. There was a mighty storm, as though the very God of Nature was in agony.

And truly he was, for while he was hanging on the cross for another three hours, from noon to 3:00 P.M., all the infinite agonies and merciless pains of Gethsemane recurred. (“The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” *Ensign*, May 1985, p. 10)

#### **Joseph B. Wirthlin**

Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane more than you can comprehend. Willingly and lovingly, He took upon Himself not only our sins but the pains, sicknesses, and sufferings of all mankind. He suffered similarly on the cross, where He gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins if we will repent. And then in His ultimate triumph, He was resurrected and broke the bands of death, making the Resurrection available to all. (“Growing into the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, p. 40)

### *God’s Spirit Was Withdrawn From Christ During the Ordeal of the Atonement*

#### **Brigham Young**

I ask, is there a reason for men and women being exposed more constantly and more powerfully, to the power of the enemy, by having visions than by not having them?” There is and it is simply this—God never bestows upon His people, or upon an individual, superior blessings without a severe trial to prove them, to prove that individual, or that people, to see whether they will keep their covenants with Him, and keep in remembrance what He has shown them. Then the greater the vision, the greater the display of the power of the enemy. And when such individuals are off their guard they are left to themselves, as Jesus was. For this express purpose the Father withdrew His spirit from His son, at the time he was to be crucified. Jesus had been with his Father, talked with Him, dwelt in His bosom,

and knew all about heaven, about making the earth, about the transgression of man, and what would redeem the people, and that he was the character who was to redeem the sons of earth, and the earth itself from all sin that had come upon it. The light, knowledge, power, and glory with which he was clothed were far above, or exceeded that of all others who had been upon the earth after the fall, consequently at the very moment, at the hour when the crisis came for him to offer up his life, the Father withdrew Himself, withdrew His Spirit, and cast a veil over him. That is what made him sweat blood. If he had had the power of God upon him, he would not have sweat blood; but all was withdrawn from him, and a veil was cast over him, and he then plead with the Father not to forsake him. “No,” says the Father, “you must have your trials, as well as others.” (*Journal of Discourses*, 3:205-206)

### *What Christ Suffered in the Ordeal of the Atonement*

#### **Howard W. Hunter**

We are indebted to the prophet Alma for our knowledge of the full measure of His suffering [quotes Alma 7:11-12] (“He Is Risen,” *Ensign*, May 1988, p.16)

#### **Alma 7**

11 And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

12 And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities.

13 Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me.

#### **Howard W. Hunter**

Think of it! When his body was taken from the cross and hastily placed in a borrowed tomb, he, the sinless Son of God, had already taken upon him not only the sins and temptations of every human soul who will repent, but all of our sickness and grief and pain of every kind. He suffered these afflictions as we suffer them, according to the flesh. He suffered them all. He did this

to perfect his mercy and his ability to lift us above every earthly trial. (“He Is Risen,” *Ensign*, May 1988, p.16)

#### **Neal A. Maxwell**

I refer to the hours that comprised Gethsemane and Calvary and also the period just before. ...

While weary and worried Apostles slept, in Gethsemane Jesus began to be “sore amazed” (Mark 14:33), or in the Greek rendition, “awestruck” and “astonished” and “very heavy” as the Psalmist had foretold. (See Ps. 69:20–21.)

Jesus, Creator and Jehovah, surely had known for a long time what He must do. Nevertheless, He had never known, personally, the exquisite and exacting process of an atonement before. And it was so much worse than even He with His unique intellect had ever imagined. No wonder an angel appeared to strengthen Him! (See Luke 22:43.)

No wonder He began to be “very heavy” or, also in the Greek rendition, very “dejected” and “depressed” and filled with anguish. The cumulative weight of all mortal sins, somehow, past, present, and future, pressed upon that perfect, sinless, and sensitive soul! All infirmities and sicknesses were part, too, of the awful arithmetic of the Atonement. (See Alma 7:11, 12; Isa. 53:3–5; Matt. 8:17.)

“And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me.” (Mark 14:36.) It was the cry of a Child, in deep distress, for His Father.

As Jehovah, Jesus had said to Abraham: “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Gen. 18:14.) Jesus had taught this very truth about what was feasible for believers in His mortal ministry. Had not an angel told a perplexed Mary about her own impending miracle, saying, “For with God nothing shall be impossible”? (Luke 1:37.) And so in His anguish, Jesus actually pled that the hour and cup might pass from Him. In His anguish, He even quoted back to the Father those special, significant words—“All things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me.” (See Matt. 16:26; 26:39.) This was not theater—this was shuddering reality! Did the Lamb, in this extremity, hope for a ram in the thicket? I do not know, but the suffering was enormously multiplied by infinity. His soul-cries are understandable. (“The New Testament—A Matchless Portrait of the Savior,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1986, p. 26)

Jesus’ perfect empathy was ensured when, along with His Atonement for our sins, He took upon Himself our sicknesses, sorrows, griefs, and infirmities and came to know these “according to the flesh” (Alma 7:11–12). He did this in order that He might be filled with perfect,

personal mercy and empathy and thereby know how to succor us in our infirmities. He thus fully comprehends human suffering. (“Enduring Well,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1997, p. 7)

When Jesus took upon Himself the heavy, atoning yoke in order to redeem all mankind by paying the agonizing price for our sins, He thereby experienced what He Himself termed the “fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God” (D&C 76:107). The phrase itself makes the soul tremble. Jesus also volunteered to take upon Himself additional agony in order that He might experience and thus know certain things “according to the flesh,” namely human sicknesses and infirmities and human griefs, including those not associated with sin (see Alma 7:11–12). Therefore, as a result of His great Atonement, Jesus was filled with unique empathy and with perfect mercy. (“Becoming a Disciple,” *Ensign*, June 1996, p. 12)

Jesus thus not only satisfied the requirements of divine justice but also, particularly in His Gethsemane and Calvary ordeals, demonstrated and perfected His capacity to succor His people and his empathy for them. He came to know, personally and perfectly, “according to the flesh” how to help us become more like His fully comprehending Father: “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5). Jesus’ daily mortal experiences and His ministry, to be sure, acquainted Him by observation with a sample of human sicknesses, grief, pains, sorrows, and infirmities which are “common to man” (1 Corinthians 10:13). But the agonies of the Atonement were infinite and first-hand! Since not all human sorrow and pain is connected to sin, the full intensiveness of the Atonement involved bearing our pains, infirmities, and sicknesses, as well as our sins. Whatever our sufferings, we can safely cast our care upon him; for he careth for [us]” (1 Peter 5:7). Jesus is a fully comprehending Christ. (From *Not My Will, But Thine*, p.51)

### **James E. Faust**

It seems that no matter how carefully we walk through life’s paths, we pick up some thorns, briars, and slivers. ...

How are the thorns and slivers of life removed? The power to remove the thorns in our lives and in the lives of others begins with ourselves. Moroni writes that when we deny ourselves of ungodliness, then the grace of Christ is sufficient for us. (See Moro. 10:32.)

Too often we seek bandages to cover the guilt rather than removal of the thorn causing the pain. How much

we resist the momentary pain of removing a sliver, even though it will relieve the longer-lasting pain of a festering sore. Everyone knows that if thorns and briars and slivers are not removed from the flesh, they will cause sores that fester and will not heal. ...

As a carpenter, Jesus would have been familiar with slivers and thorny woods. As a child, He would have learned that one rarely gets a sliver when working the wood in the right direction. He would also have known more than any how slivers—small and painful—divert attention from important matters. The scourging of Jesus took place partly with thorns:

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.

“And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.

“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

“And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.” (Matt. 27:27–30.)

Perhaps this cruel act was a perverse attempt to mimic the placing of an emperor’s laurel upon His head. Thus, there was pressed down upon Him a crown of thorns. He accepted the pain as part of the great gift He had promised to make. How poignant this was, considering that thorns signified God’s displeasure as He cursed the ground for Adam’s sake that henceforth it would bring forth thorns. But by wearing the crown, Jesus transformed thorns into a symbol of His glory. ...

Our Savior knows “according to the flesh” every dimension of our suffering. There is no infirmity He is not familiar with. In His agony He became acquainted with all of the thorns, slivers, and thistles that might afflict us: [quotes (Alma 7:11–12.)] (From “A Crown of Thorns, a Crown of Glory,” *Ensign*, May 1991, pp. 68–70)

### *During the Ordeal of the Atonement, Christ Descended Below All Things*

### **Ezra Taft Benson**

It was in Gethsemane that Jesus took on Himself the sins of the world, in Gethsemane that His pain was equivalent to the cumulative burden of all men, in Gethsemane that He descended below all things so that all could repent and come to Him. The mortal mind fails to fathom, the tongue cannot express, the pen of man cannot describe the breadth, the depth, the height of the suffering of our Lord—nor His infinite love for us.

(*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p.14)

### **John Taylor**

Groaning beneath this concentrated load, this intense, incomprehensible pressure, this terrible exaction of Divine justice, from which feeble humanity shrank, and through the agony thus experienced sweating great drops of blood, He was led to exclaim, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He had wrestled with the superincumbent load in the wilderness, He had struggled against the powers of darkness that had been let loose upon him there; placed below all things, His mind surcharged with agony and pain, lonely and apparently helpless and forsaken, in his agony and the blood oozed from His pores. Thus rejected by His own, attacked by the powers of darkness, and seemingly forsaken by His God, on the cross He bowed beneath the accumulated load, and cried out in anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" When death approached to relieve Him from His horrible position, a ray of hope appeared through the abyss of darkness with which He had been surrounded, and in a spasm of relief, seeing the bright future beyond, He said, "It is finished! Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." As a God, He descended below all things, and made Himself subject to man in man's fallen condition; as a man, He grappled with all the circumstances incident to His sufferings in the world. Anointed, indeed, with the oil of gladness above His fellows, He struggled with and overcame the powers of men and devils, of earth and hell combined; and aided by this superior power of the Godhead, He vanquished death, hell and the grave, and arose triumphant as the Son of God, the very eternal Father, the Messiah, the Prince of peace, the Redeemer, the Savior of the world; having finished and completed the work pertaining to the atonement, which His Father had given Him to do as the Son of God and the Son of man. As the Son of Man, He endured all that it was possible for flesh and blood to endure, as the Son of God He triumphed over all, and forever ascended to the right hand of God, to further carry out the designs of Jehovah pertaining to the world and to the human family. (*Mediation and Atonement*, Ch.21)

### *The Savior Suffered for ALL Mankind*

### **D&C 19**

15 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.

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

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

18 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--

19 Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. (Emphasis added)

### **2 Nephi 9**

21 And he cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken unto his voice; for behold, he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam.

### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

There was never a sin committed in this world for which reparation has not been, or will not have to be made. If I sin, there must be a reparation or penalty required to pay the debt. If you sin, it is the same. There never was any sin committed, big or small, that has not been atoned for, or that will not have to be atoned for.... Justice made certain demands, and Adam could not pay the price, so mercy steps in. The Son of God says: "I will go down and pay the price. I will be the Redeemer and redeem men from Adam's transgression. I will take upon me the sins of the world and redeem or save every soul from his own sins who will repent." That is the only condition. The Savior does not save anybody from his individual sins only on condition of his repentance. So the effect of Adam's transgression was to place all of us in the pit with him. Then the Savior comes along, not subject to that pit, and towers the ladder. He comes down into the pit and makes it possible for us to use the ladder to escape. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:122-123)

### **Spencer W. Kimball**

"Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4.), and for such transgression a punishment is affixed under eternal law. Every normal individual is responsible for the sins he commits, and would be similarly liable to the punishment attached to those broken laws. However, Christ's death on the cross offers us exemption from the eternal punishment for most sins. He took upon himself the punishment for the sins of all the world, with the understanding that those who repent and come unto him will be forgiven of their sins and freed from the punishment. (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, p.133)

### **Ezra Taft Benson**

To possess a testimony of Jesus is to know that He voluntarily took upon Himself the sins of all mankind in the Garden of Gethsemane, which caused Him to suffer in both body and spirit and to bleed from every pore. All this He did so that we would not have to suffer if we would repent. [See D&C 19:16, 18.] (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, pp.465-466)

### **Thomas S. Monson**

Our Mediator, our Redeemer, our Brother, our Advocate with the Father died for our sins and the sins of all mankind. (“They Showed the Way,” *Ensign*, May 1997, p. 52)

### **James E. Faust**

He suffered so much pain, “indescribable anguish,” and “overpowering torture” [John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement* (1882), 150] for our sake. His profound suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He took upon Himself all the sins of all other mortals, caused Him “to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit.” [D&C 19:18].

(“The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, pp. 18ff)

### **M. Russell Ballard**

Thankfully, Jesus Christ courageously fulfilled this sacrifice in ancient Jerusalem. There in the quiet isolation of the Garden of Gethsemane, He knelt among the gnarled olive trees, and in some incredible way that none of us can fully comprehend, the Savior took upon Himself the sins of the world. Even though His life was pure and free of sin, He paid the ultimate penalty for sin—yours, mine, and everyone who has ever lived. (“The Atonement and the Value of One Soul,” *Ensign*, May 2004, pp. 84ff)

### **Joseph B. Wirthlin**

Learn of your Savior. Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane more than you can comprehend. Willingly and lovingly, He took upon Himself not only our sins but the pains, sicknesses, and sufferings of all mankind. (“Growing into the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, p. 40)

## *The Atonement is Infinite*

### *How is Christ’s Atonement Infinite?*

#### **Infinite in Duration**

##### **2 Nephi 9**

7 Wherefore, it must needs be an infinite atonement--save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption. Wherefore, the first judgment which came upon man must needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more.

8 O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more.

9 And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness.

#### **It is For ALL Mankind**

##### **2 Nephi 25:16**

... believe in Christ, the Son of God, and the atonement, which is infinite for all mankind ...

#### **It Was An Infinite– Not Mortal–Sacrifice**

##### **Alma 34**

10 For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice.

11 Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another. Now, if a man murdereth, behold will our law, which is just, take the life of his brother? I say unto you, Nay.

12 But the law requireth the life of him who hath murdered; therefore there can be nothing which is short of an infinite atonement which will suffice for the sins of the world.

#### **Infinite in Intenseness and for All Worlds**

##### **Russell M. Nelson**

In preparatory times of the Old Testament, the

practice of atonement was finite—meaning it had an end. It was a symbolic forecast of the definitive Atonement of Jesus the Christ. His Atonement is infinite—without an end [see 2 Ne. 9:7; 2 Ne. 25:16; Alma 34:10, 12, 14]. It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. It was infinite in time, putting an end to the preceding prototype of animal sacrifice. It was infinite in scope – it was to be done once for all [see D&C 76:24; Moses 1:33]. And the mercy of the Atonement extends not only to an infinite number of people, but also to an infinite number of worlds created by Him. It was infinite beyond any human scale of measurement or mortal comprehension.

Jesus was the only one who could offer such an infinite atonement, since He was born of a mortal mother and an immortal Father. Because of that unique birthright, Jesus was an infinite Being. (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 35)

### Joseph Smith

And I heard a great voice, bearing record from heav’n, He’s the Saviour, and only begotten of God—By him, of him, and through him, the worlds were all made, Even all that career in the heavens so broad, Whose inhabitants, too, from the first to the last, Are sav’d by the very same Saviour of ours; And, of course, are begotten God’s daughters and sons, By the very same truths, and the very same pow’rs. (From “A Vision,” [Poetic version of D&C 76] in *Times and Seasons*, Vol.4, p.82, verses 19-20)

### *Infinite In What the Savior Suffered*

#### Spencer J. Condie

The Book of Mormon teaches us of an infinite atonement (see 2 Ne. 9:7; 2 Ne. 25:16; Alma 34:10, 12, 14), an atoning sacrifice by Christ that is unbounded by time, ethnicity, geography, or even kinds of sins, save for the unpardonable sin of denying the Holy Ghost (see Alma 39:6). The Resurrection includes all people “from the days of Adam down” to the end of time (Alma 40:18), those “both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female” (Alma 11:44). The Atonement is also infinite in the sense that the Savior not only overcame death and sin, but he also took upon himself “the pains and the sicknesses” and the “infirmities” of his people (Alma 7:11–12). The Atonement is infinite, too, in that because of the redemption made possible by his beloved Son, our Heavenly Father is able to forgive us “as often as

[we] repent” (Mosiah 26:30–31; see also Moro. 6:8). [“The Fall and Infinite Atonement,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1996, p. 26]

### Summary

#### Neal A. Maxwell

Both Jacob and Amulek declared it to be an infinite atonement (2 Nephi 9:7; Alma 34:8-12). **First**, the sacrifice of an imperfect and finite human would not have satisfied the requirements of divine justice. A mere mortal could not have performed the Atonement. Divine justice thus required that, if the repentant were not to have to pay for their own sins, the Only Begotten of the Father should lay down His life voluntarily for that purpose ... “For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man, neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice; but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice. Now there is not any man that can sacrifice his own blood which will atone for the sins of another” (Alma 34:10-11).

Why so great a sacrifice? Because all of us mortals need it, along with time and space— room to repent and grow, so that one day, if submissive, we can be worthy to return to the presence of God: “For behold, if Adam had put forth his hand immediately, and partaken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever, according to the word of God, having *no space for repentance*; yea, and also the word of God would have been void, and the great plan of salvation would have been frustrated” (Alma 42:5, italics added).

Furthermore, only in an “infinite atonement,” would mercy overpower the stern demands of justice (see Alma 34:15). The mercy of God responds to our helpless condition: “Since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance” (Alma 22:14).

**Second**, the infinite atonement is fully comprehensive in the immortalizing benefits it provides to all of God’s children by the grace of God (see Alma 11:40-44). “The atonement which is infinite for all mankind” (2 Nephi 25:16) provides infinite benefits “according to the great plan of the Eternal God” who foresaw the Fall and who mercifully decreed “there must be an atonement made” (Alma 34:9).

A **third** dimension may be seen in the infinite intensiveness of Christ’s suffering. This intensiveness required a fully atoning and fully comprehending Atoner who would “know according to the flesh” human pain, sorrow, grief, and misery (Alma 7:11-12). “For behold,

he suffereth the pains of all men, yea, the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children, who belong to the family of Adam” (2 Nephi 9:21).

Thus, in addition to bearing our sins—the required essence of the Atonement—the “how” of which we surely do not understand, Jesus is further described as having come to know our sicknesses, griefs, pains, and infirmities as well. Another “how” we cannot now comprehend! (See Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17; Mosiah 14:4; Alma 7:11-12.) Jesus thus not only satisfied the requirements of divine justice but also, particularly in His Gethsemane and Calvary ordeals, demonstrated and perfected His capacity to succor His people and his empathy for them. He came to know, personally and perfectly, “according to the flesh” how to help us become more like His fully comprehending Father: “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his

understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5).

Jesus’ daily mortal experiences and His ministry, to be sure, acquainted Him by observation with a sample of human sicknesses, grief, pains, sorrows, and infirmities which are “common to man” (1 Corinthians 10:13). But the agonies of the Atonement were infinite and first-hand! Since not all human sorrow and pain is connected to sin, the full intensiveness of the Atonement involved bearing our pains, infirmities, and sicknesses, as well as our sins. Whatever our sufferings, we can safely cast our care upon him; for he careth for [us]” (1 Peter 5:7).

Jesus is a fully comprehending Christ.

The Atonement, then, was infinite in the divineness of the one sacrificed, in the comprehensiveness of its coverage, and in the intensiveness—incomprehensible to us—of the Savior’s suffering. (*Not My Will, But Thine*, pp.49-51; bolding not original)

## *Atonement is Both General and Individual*

### **Boyd K. Packer**

You should learn while you are young that while the Atonement of Christ applies to humanity in general, the influence of it is individual, very personal, and very useful. Even to you beginners, an understanding of the Atonement is of immediate and very practical value in everyday life. (“Washed Clean,” *Ensign*, May 1997, p. 9)

### **D&C 138**

19 And there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance.

### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

We must accept the infinite atonement of Christ, believing that he is the Redeemer of the world, both from Adam’s transgression and from our individual sins on condition of our repentance. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:3)

### **James E. Talmage**

Through the atonement accomplished by Jesus Christ—a redeeming service, vicariously rendered in behalf of mankind, all of whom have become estranged from God by the effects of sin both inherited and individually incurred—the way is opened for a reconciliation whereby man may come again into communion with God, and be made fit to dwell anew and

forever in the presence of his Eternal Father. This basal thought is admirably implied in our English word, “atonement,” which, as its syllables attest, is at-one-ment, “denoting reconciliation, or the bringing into agreement of those who have been estranged.” The effect of the atonement may be conveniently considered as twofold:

1. The universal redemption of the human race from death invoked by the fall of our first parents; and,
2. Salvation, whereby means of relief from the results of individual sin are provided. (*Jesus the Christ*, p.23)

### **Orson Pratt**

The earth was formed to be inhabited—it was designed to be the abode of animated existence—the dwelling-place of beings capable of enjoying life and happiness. ... At the time of its creation, it was pronounced by its Author to be “very good.” ...

Such was the inheritance given to man, with its vast treasures and sumptuous luxuries—such was the gift of heaven under certain restrictions. These restrictions were not complied with—man fell—a great change came over the fair face of creation—the earth was cursed—sickness, pain, and misery ensued—immortality yielded to mortality—death reigned triumphantly throughout the animal kingdom—the everlasting inheritance on the newly-formed earth was forfeited—all seemed to be lost—forever lost! ... The earth, though cursed, was to be



redeemed ... Though this great redemption was to be universal, yet the change was to be gradual or progressive, not immediate; the effects of the fall were to continue for a season, until all the inhabitants of the spirit world, designed for this creation, should learn by bitter experience, the unhappy consequences of sin. Hence, the whole world still groans under the sad effects of the original transgression. ....

The universal redemption of the posterity of Adam from the fall will be fully accomplished after the earth has been filled with its measure of inhabitants, and all men have been redeemed from the grave to immortality, and the earth itself has been changed and made entirely new.

But a universal redemption from the effects of original sin, has nothing to do with redemption from our personal sins; for the original sin of Adam, and the personal sins of his children, are two different things. The first was committed by man in his immortal state; the second was committed by man in a mortal state; the former was committed in a state of ignorance of good or evil; the latter was committed by man, having a knowledge of both good and evil. As the sins are different, and committed entirely under different circumstances, so the penalties are different also. The penalty of the first transgression was an eternal separation of body and spirit, and eternal banishment from the presence of Jehovah; while the penalty of our own transgressions does not involve a disunion of body and spirit, but only eternal banishment. The first penalty not only shut man out from the presence of God, but deprived him eternally of a body; the second penalty permits him to retain his body, though in a banished condition. As the penalties are different, so also is the redemption. Redemption from the first penalty is unconditional on the part of man; redemption from the second penalty is conditional. Unconditional redemption is universal; it takes within its scope all mankind; it is as unlimited as the fall; it redeems men from all its effects; it restores to them their bodies; it restores them to the presence of God.

The children of Adam had no agency in the transgression of their first parents, and therefore they are not required to exercise any agency in their redemption from its penalty. They are redeemed from it without faith, repentance, baptism, or and other act, either of the mind or body.

Conditional redemption is also universal in its

nature; it is offered to all, but not received by all; it is a universal gift, though not universally accepted; its benefits can be obtained only through faith, repentance, baptism, the laying on of the hands, and obedience to all other requirements of the Gospel.

Unconditional redemption is a gift forced upon mankind, which they cannot reject, though they were disposed. Not so with conditional redemption; it can be received or rejected according to the will of the creature.

Redemption from the original sin is without faith or works; redemption from our own sins is given through faith and works. Both are the gifts of free grace; but while one is a gift forced upon us unconditionally, the other is a gift merely offered to us conditionally. The reception of the one is compulsory; the reception of the other is voluntary. ...

Had there been no other sin but that of Adam's, the redeemed earth would have become the eternal abode of all the posterity of Adam, without one exception. But both man and the earth have been still further corrupted by other sins. The posterity of Adam have transgressed the code of laws given since the fall, and subjected themselves to its penalty. This penalty does not interfere with the first penalty. Man will be redeemed from the first before the second will be fully inflicted. When his redemption from the first death is completed, then comes the judgment, when his own sins will be inquired into, and not Adam's. As he stands before the judgment-seat, he will find himself entirely innocent of Adam's transgression, and entirely redeemed from the effects of it, but he still finds himself guilty of his own individual sins, the penalty of which is a second death, not a dissolution of body and spirit like that of the first death, but a banishment from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power.

Redemption from the second death, as we have already observed, is conditional. Man having voluntarily committed sin, must voluntarily comply with the conditions of redemption: otherwise, he must suffer the penalty. ... There is no escape for the sinner from the second death, only through the conditions of the Gospel. All who will believe in Christ, and repent of their sins, and be baptized by immersion for the remission of them and receive the Holy Ghost through the ordinance of the laying on of hands, and continue faithful unto the end, shall escape the penalty of the second death. All who reject these conditions must suffer it, for the word of God cannot become void, and justice be thwarted from his stern decrees. (*Journal of Discourses*, 1:328-331)

*With Justice Satisfied Man May Be Redeemed*

## **John Taylor**

From the facts in the case and the testimony presented in the Scriptures it becomes evident that through the great atonement, the expiatory sacrifice of the Son of God, it is made possible that man can be redeemed, restored, resurrected and exalted to the elevated position designed for him in the creation as a Son of God: that eternal justice and law required the penalty to be paid by man himself, or by the atonement of the Son of God: that Jesus offered Himself as the great expiatory sacrifice; that this offering being in accordance with the demands or requirements of the law, was accepted by the great Lawgiver; that it was prefigured by sacrifices, and ultimately fulfilled by Himself according to the eternal covenant. "He was wounded (as prophesied of) for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

The Savior thus becomes master of the situation—the debt is paid, the redemption made, the covenant fulfilled, justice satisfied, the will of God done, and all power is now given into the hands of the Son of God—the power of the resurrection, the power of the

redemption, the power of salvation, the power to enact laws for the carrying out and accomplishment of this design. Hence life and immortality are brought to light, the Gospel is introduced. and He becomes the author of eternal life and exaltation, He is the Redeemer, the Resurrector, the Savior of man and the world; and He has appointed the law of the Gospel as the medium which must be complied with in this world or the next, as He complied with His Father's law; hence "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned"

The plan, the arrangement, the agreement, the covenant was made, entered into and accepted before the foundation of the world; it was prefigured by sacrifices, and was carried out and consummated on the cross.

Hence being the mediator between God and man, He becomes by right the dictator and director on earth and in heaven for the living and for the dead, for the past, the present and the future, pertaining to man as associated with this earth or the heavens, in time of eternity, the Captain of our salvation, the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, the Lord and Giver of life. (*Mediation and Atonement*, Chapter 24)

## *Mankind is Bought With A Price*

### **1 Corinthians 6**

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

### **Brigham Young**

We are not our own, we are bought with a price, we are the Lord's; our time, our talents, our gold and silver, our wheat and fine flour, our wine and our oil, our cattle, and all there is on this earth that we have in our possession is the Lord's ... (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, p.176)

### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

I am sorry to say that I have heard of some members of the Church saying that Christ did not buy us with his blood. One of them has said: "That people of the world owed a debt and Jesus paid the debt for all: This thought does violence to justice, for the suffering of the good to pay the debt of the bad is contrary to the law of life." Another says: "That Jesus was a ransom for a captive world: In this case Jesus must have been paid to someone who held the world captive; but in the very nature of his mission or ransom he could not be held captive and God must have deceived the captor."

Well, such thoughts as these might do honor to an

infidel, but not to a member of the Church. Those who speak this way need to repent. They should read the scriptures and especially the Book of Mormon. Jesus did come into the world to ransom it. Through his atonement we were bought from death and hell. Death and hell were paid -- paid in full -- and Christ was the only one who could pay that debt. What did Paul mean when he said we were bought with a price?" [1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23.] What does Jesus mean when he calls himself our "Redeemer?" [Isa. 41:14; D. & C. 8:1; Rev. 5:9-10.] If we were not bought, if we were not ransomed by Jesus Christ, then we are still in our sins and still subject to death and hell. These men, ignorant of the plan of salvation, should read intensively the scriptures. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:125-126)

Our Redeemer has done everything that is essential for our salvation, and he has taught us that if we serve him with all our soul, and all our days, yet we are unprofitable servants and have done only that which it was our duty to do. Paul says we were bought with a price, and we are not our own. Our Redeemer has a perfect right to command us, and all that we do is for our own sakes. He can do without us, but we cannot do without him. We are told that we are unprofitable

servants, and so we are, if we think of trying to pay our Savior back for what he has done for us, for that we never can do; and we cannot by any number of acts, or a full life of faithful service, place our Savior in our debt. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:15)

**Jeffrey R. Holland**

You cannot with impunity “crucify Christ

afresh.”[see Heb. 6:6] “Flee fornication,” [1 Cor. 6:18] Paul cries, and flee “*anything like unto it*,” [D&C 59:6; emphasis added] the Doctrine and Covenants adds. Why? Well, for one reason because of the incalculable suffering in both body and spirit endured by the Savior of the world so that we *could* flee. [see especially D&C 19:15–20] We owe Him something for that. Indeed, we owe Him everything for that. “Ye are not your own,” Paul says. “Ye [have been] bought with a price: therefore *glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s*.” [1 Cor. 6:19–20; emphasis added; see also 1 Cor. 6:13–18] (From [“Personal Purity,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, p. 76])

## *The Atonement Reconciles Man With God*

**James E. Faust**

The act of the Atonement is, in its simplest terms, a reconciliation of man with his God. The word atonement *means* to be at one. (“The Supernal Gift of the Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, p. 12)

**Hebrews 2**

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

**Jacob 4**

11 Wherefore, beloved brethren, be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son, and ye may obtain a resurrection, according to the power of the resurrection which is in Christ, and be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God, having faith, and obtained a good hope of glory in him before he manifesteth himself in the flesh.

**Bruce R. McConkie**

“The man Gabriel” came to Daniel and taught him that “Messiah the Prince” should come “to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” (Dan. 9:24-25.) That is to say, the Messiah would come to make possible a reconciliation between God and man.

In his lost and fallen condition, man is in a state of sin and spiritual darkness and is himself subject to and guilty of sin. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23.) “There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Eccl. 7:20.) Christ only was sinless. All accountable men having sinned are thereby unclean and unable to dwell

with or be in the presence of their God. ...

Thus, to restore man to a state of harmony and unity with Deity, man must repent, receive a remission of his sins, become clean, and be thereby ransomed from his lost and fallen state. To be saved, man must be reconciled to God through the atonement of his Son. “Be reconciled unto him through the atonement of Christ, his Only Begotten Son,” Jacob preached, “and ye may obtain a resurrection, according to the power of the resurrection which is in Christ, and be presented as the first-fruits of Christ unto God, having faith, and [having] obtained a good hope of glory in him.” (Jacob 4:11.)

Can there be any more glorious concept than this, that lowly and fallen and mortal and sinful man— that all of us—can forsake our evil and wicked ways and find harmony and unity with our Eternal Father? (*The Promised Messiah*, pp.259-261)

**Russell M. Nelson**

In the English language, the components are *at-one-ment*, suggesting that a person is at one with another. Other languages [such as Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and German] employ words that connote either *expiation* or *reconciliation*. Expiation means “to atone for.” Reconciliation comes from Latin roots *re*, meaning “again”; *con*, meaning “with”; and *sella*, meaning “seat.” Reconciliation, therefore, literally means “to sit again with.” .... The Savior’s gift of immortality comes to all who have ever lived. But His gift of eternal life requires repentance and obedience to specific ordinances and covenants. Essential ordinances of the gospel symbolize the Atonement. Baptism by immersion is symbolic of the death, burial, and Resurrection of the Redeemer. Partaking of the sacrament renews baptismal covenants and also renews

our memory of the Savior's broken flesh and of the blood He shed for us. Ordinances of the temple

symbolize our reconciliation with the Lord and seal families together forever. ("The Atonement," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 35)

## *Christ Becomes Man's Advocate With God*

### **D&C 45**

3 Listen to him who is the advocate with the Father, who is pleading your cause before him--

4 Saying: Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified;

5 Wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.

### **Bruce R. McConkie**

Jesus pleads the cause of the Twelve—and all the saints—in the courts above. He is their Mediator, Advocate, and Intercessor. He makes intercession for them, because they have forsaken the world and come unto him; he advocates their cause, for their cause is his cause and they have received his gospel; he performs a divine service of mediation, reconciling fallen man to his Maker, because the fallen ones choose now to associate with those who are not of this world. Jesus prays, thus, not for the world, but for those who have kept his commandments; who have reconciled themselves to God through faith and repentance; who are preparing themselves for an abode with him and his Father. *And his interceding petitions are always available for all men, if they will but believe his word and obey his law.* (*The Mortal Messiah*, 4:111; emphasis added.)

### **Neal A. Maxwell**

The entirety of Jesus' unique role as advocate cannot be understood if approached only legalistically and adversarially, such as when one mortal lawyer jousts with another lawyer before an impassive judge. In the sense here intended, an advocate seeks to plead, to persuade, to intercede, and to mediate in order to aid another's cause. This is surely part of what Jesus does for us. But He is, once again, both the advocate and the judge! No mortal lawyer has such a dual role.

When commencing the agonies of the Atonement, Jesus declared of His atoning purpose, "For this cause came I into the world" (John 18:37).

In calling upon the mercy available in Father's plan, Jesus thereby truly "advocateth the cause of the children

of men" (Moro. 7:28). It is significant that He so pleads for us out of His full, personal knowledge and understanding of each of us, including our individual experiences and shortfalls set amid the shared general human condition. "Behold, and hearken, . . . saith the Lord your God, even Jesus Christ, your advocate, who knoweth the weakness of man and how to succor them who are tempted" (D&C 62:1).

He can succor us in any form of the human condition because, as He reminded Joseph in the Liberty jail: "The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?" (D&C 122:8.) No person, therefore, who comes before Him can exclaim, "You don't understand what I have been through!"

How like the tender words cited earlier (D&C 45:3-5) are the following and amplifying words recorded in Alma, attesting to Jesus' personal knowledge of our individual and personal sufferings and sicknesses:

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people.

"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." (Alma 7:11-12. See also Matt. 8:17.)

Hence Jesus not only bore our sins personally in order to atone for them, but He also bore our pains, infirmities, and afflictions. Thereby ensured is the precious fact that Jesus' mercy would be full, because He knows how to succor us in a unique, merciful, and personal way—amid all of that through which we mortals individually pass. Having so purchased us once, His glad and great investment in us continues (see Acts 20:28). ...

Therefore, beyond ensuring general immortality if, as to our sins, we are adequately and truly repentant, He likewise specifically succors and pleads for us as only He can. He does this out of His perfect love, a love which is fully informed by His perfect, personal familiarity with our individual situations. No wonder He

is the wondrous Keeper of the entering gate to eternal life, and in His loving empathy He “employeth no servant there” (see 2 Ne. 9:41). ...

Hence we see how Jesus is our advocate in the most unique way. After all, if all this were analogous to mere mortal advocacy, how many advocates know their clients perfectly? For example, how many mortal advocates have actually suffered deeply, physically and mentally, for their clients? Besides all this, we are not mere clients. We are Christ’s spirit brothers and sisters! ...

However, unlike the “finished” act of the Atonement achieved in that axis of atoning agony—Gethsemane and on Calvary—across an additional time frame Jesus’ continuing advocacy for us mortals is spread. It continues in a special, ongoing process as we, individually, access and apply His atoning blood. (See Mosiah 4:1-4.) Having paid the price for us, the Grand Atoner is also the apparent judge as to our entitlement to access further His atonement, as we repent and become “the children of Christ” (Mosiah 5:7).

Jesus did not retire to some corner of the universe for a well-earned vacation after performing the great Atonement, but He has remained constantly vigilant and

vigorous, personally mindful of all of us.

While the scriptures relevant to Jesus’ advocacy are abundant, verb tenses vary, as already noted, suggesting something significant. For further examples consider the *post-atonement* scriptures, such as Heb. 7:25, which declares that “Jesus *ever liveth* to make intercession,” suggesting a continuousness. Heb. 9:24 speaks of how He *is to appear* to make intercession for us, perhaps at the day of judgment. The Apostle John wrote that *if we sin, we have an advocate* with the Father, likewise suggesting an ongoingness to Jesus’ advocacy and to our accessing and applying His atonement (1 Jn. 2:1). Moro. 7:28 notes Christ’s atonement and declares that He “*advocateth* the cause of the children of men.” D&C 45:3-5, as noted earlier, indicates that He “*is pleading*” in our behalf, again the indication of an ongoingness.

Hence His pleading apparently continues for all specific and worthy individuals until the final judgment. ... Hence Jesus’ advocacy appears to be a continuing process, as we struggle individually to overcome our weakness and thereby to “apply the atoning blood of Christ” by becoming more like Him (Mosiah 4:2). (*One More Strain of Praise* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1999], pp. 34-48)

## *We Are Saved Through the Grace of The Atonement and Not By Our Works*

### **M. Russell Ballard**

It is only through the infinite Atonement of Jesus Christ that people can overcome the consequences of bad choices. Thus Nephi teaches us that it is ultimately by the grace of Christ that we are saved even after all that we can do (see 2 Ne. 25:23). No matter how hard we work, no matter how much we obey, no matter how many good things we do in this life, it would not be enough were it not for Jesus Christ and His loving grace. On our own we cannot earn the kingdom of God—no matter what we do. Unfortunately, there are some within the Church who have become so preoccupied with performing good works that they forget that those works—as good as they may be—are hollow unless they are accompanied by a complete dependence on Christ. It is this dependence that causes us to want to sing what Alma eloquently referred to as “the song of redeeming love” (Alma 5:26). [“Building Bridges of Understanding,” *Ensign*, June 1998, p. 65]

### **Marion G. Romney**

By yielding to the temptation of Satan we become unclean. To the extent to which we yield we become carnal, sensual, and devilish. As a consequence, we are banished from the presence of God. Without being cleansed from the stain of our transgressions we cannot be readmitted into the presence of God because “no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom.” (3 Ne. 27:19.) Men, in the exercise of their own free agency, having disqualified themselves for a place in the kingdom of God, are banished therefrom and cannot by their own unaided efforts return. If they are ever to return, atonement for their sins must be made by someone not himself banished: Jesus was that one. (“Christ’s Atonement: The Gift Supreme,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1973, p.3)

### **Richard G. Scott**

Jesus Christ possessed merits that no other child of Heavenly Father could possibly have. He was a God, Jehovah, before His birth in Bethlehem. His Father not only gave Him His spirit body, but Jesus was His Only Begotten Son in the flesh. Our Master lived a perfect,

sinless life and therefore was free from the demands of justice. He was and is perfect in every attribute, including love, compassion, patience, obedience, forgiveness, and humility. His mercy pays our debt to

justice when we repent and obey Him. Even with our best efforts to obey His teachings we will still fall short, yet because of His grace we will be saved “after all we can do.” ( “Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer,” *Ensign*, May 1997, p. 53)

## *Access to the Atonement is Gained Through Good Works*

### *Grace Effective Only After All We Can Do*

#### **2 Nephi 25**

23 For we labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.

#### **James E. Faust**

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 [see 2 Ne. 25:23]. . . .

The Atonement cleanses us of sin on condition of our repentance. Repentance is the condition on which mercy is extended [see Alma 42:22–25]. After all we can do to pay to the uttermost farthing and make right our wrongs, the Savior’s grace is activated in our lives through the Atonement, which purifies us and can perfect us [see 2 Ne. 25:23; Alma 34:15–16; Alma 42:22–24; Moro. 10:32–33]. (“The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, pp. 18ff)

#### **Marion G. Romney**

As we sift the ways of the world let us reject the commonly accepted attitude of expecting the government to supply us with the necessities of life. This practice, if fully adopted, will change any society from one of freedom to one of slavery. Let us contend for the gospel of work. Let us be self-reliant. Salvation is an individual matter. There will be no mass salvation. Some have mistakenly concluded from Paul’s statement—“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works” (Eph. 2:8–9)—some have erroneously concluded from this statement that works are not necessary.

The truth was spoken by Nephi when he said, “We are saved [by grace], after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23).

It will require maximum effort for us to bring ourselves within the reach of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ so that we can be saved. There will be no

government dole which can get us through the pearly gates. Nor will anyone go through those gates who wants to go through on the efforts of another. (“Fundamental Welfare Services,” *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 94)

### *What Does “All We Can Do” Consist Of?*

#### **Dallin H. Oaks**

Some Christians accuse Latter-day Saints who give this answer of denying the grace of God through claiming they can earn their own salvation. We answer this accusation with the words of two Book of Mormon prophets. Nephi taught, “For we labor diligently ... to persuade our children ... to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do” (2 Ne. 25:23). And what is “all we can do”? It surely includes repentance (see Alma 24:11) and baptism, keeping the commandments, and enduring to the end. Moroni pleaded, “Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moro. 10:32). [“Have You Been Saved?” *Ensign*, May 1998, p. 56]

### *Access to the Individual Atonement is Gained Through Repentance, Ordinances, and Enduring to the End*

#### **Robert D. Hales**

However, for the full blessings of the Atonement to take effect in our lives and allow us to return to live with our Heavenly Father, we must repent of our sins and be faithful in obeying the commandments of God. Thus, the redemptive blessings of repentance and forgiveness are an important part of the Atonement, but they are

conditional upon our faithfulness in obeying the commandments and the ordinances of God. (“If Thou Wilt Enter into Life, Keep the Commandments,” *Ensign*, May 1996, p. 36)

### **Article of Faith 3**

We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

### **Alma 22**

14 And since man had fallen he could not merit anything of himself; but the sufferings and death of Christ atone for their sins, through faith and repentance, and so forth;

### **3 Nephi 27**

19 And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

20 Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

### **D&C 20**

25 That as many as would believe and be baptized in his holy name, and endure in faith to the end, should be saved—

29 And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

### **Harold B. Lee**

But I do not think that is what the Lord meant by “grace” when he said, “My grace shall attend you.” I believe the definition of “grace” is implied in the fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants where the Lord promised to those who would engage vigorously in missionary work: “. . . and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul.” (Ibid., 4:4.) The saving “grace” of the Lord’s atoning power would extend to the giver as well as to those who would receive the saving ordinances of the gospel. (Conference Report, April 1961, pp.34-35)

### **Marion G. Romney**

The Church also accepts the scriptural doctrine that following the resurrection each person—then an immortal soul—will be arraigned before the bar of God’s justice and receive a final judgment based on his performance during his mortal probation, that the verdict will turn on obedience or disobedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. If these laws and ordinances have been complied with during mortal life, the candidate will be cleansed from the stain of sin by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and be saved in the celestial kingdom of God, there to enjoy with God eternal life. Those who have not complied with the laws and ordinances of the gospel will receive a lesser reward. (“How Men Are Saved,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, p. 39)

### **Richard G. Scott**

To receive all of the blessings of His atoning sacrifice, we are only asked to be obedient to His commandments and to receive all of these essential ordinances. (“Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer,” *Ensign*, May 1997, p. 54)

*Christ Will Not Redeem Any Who  
Do Not Repent and Accept Him*

### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

He came into this world and took upon him our individual sins on condition of our repentance. Christ does not redeem any man from his individual sins who will not repent and who will not accept him. All those who refuse to accept him as the Redeemer and refuse to turn from their sins will have to pay the price of their own sinning. [He then quotes D&C 19:16-19. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:129)]

*Te Escape Suffering We Must  
Repent and Keep God’s Commandments*

### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

A mortal man could not have stood it -- that is, a man such as we are. I do not care what his fortitude what his power, there was *no man ever born into this world that could have stood under the weight of the load that was upon the Son of God, when he was carrying my sins and yours* and making it possible that we might escape from our sins. He carried that load for us if we will only accept him as our Redeemer and keep his commandments. Some of us find it so hard, so terribly hard, to do the little things that are asked of us, and yet he was willing to carry all that tremendous load and weight of sin—not his own, for he had no sin. He did it that we might escape. He paid the price, the penalty of

our sinning.

So I say there never was a sin committed that was not atoned for. Christ paid the debt of my sins on one condition, and that is that I will believe in him and keep his commandments. He did that for you and for every other person in the world; but he never paid any debt on the cross, or before he went on the cross, for the sins of any of us, if we will be rebellious. *If we are rebellious, we will have to pay the price ourselves.* (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:130-131; emphasis original)

### *Reconciliation Requires Spiritual Rebirth*

#### **Russell M. Nelson**

Choose to Believe. Believe in God. Accept yourself as His child, created in His image. He loves you and wants you to be happy. He wants you to grow through life's choices and become more like Him. He pleads that you will "reconcile [yourself] to the will of God, and not

to the will of the ... flesh." (2 Ne. 10:24.)

Reconciliation requires faith, repentance, and baptism. Be "born of God, changed from [your] carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness." (Mosiah 27:25.) ["Addiction or Freedom," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, pp. 7-8]

#### **Bruce R. McConkie**

Paul says that Christ came "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." (Heb. 2:17.) "He is the propitiation for our sins." (1 Jn. 2:2.) If we repent, are baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and keep the commandments, we are in fact reconciled to Deity. The great propitiation operates in our lives. We are then, as Paul expressed it, "in Christ." We have become new creatures. It is of such that the ancient apostle says: "God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." That is, being reconciled we have also certain obligations. We have received not only the fact of reconciliation, and how glorious that is, but also "the ministry of reconciliation." (*The Promised Messiah*, p. 261)

## *The Holy Ghost Administers the Cleansing Effect of the Atonement*

### *Baptism and Gift of the Holy Ghost Necessary For Remission of Sins*

#### **D&C 19**

31 And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost.

#### **3 Nephi 27**

19 And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

20 Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

#### **2 Nephi 31**

13 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real

intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism--yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel.

17 Wherefore, do the things which I have told you I have seen that your Lord and your Redeemer should do; for, for this cause have they been shown unto me, that ye might know the gate by which ye should enter. For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost.

#### **Bruce R. McConkie**

It is the work and mission and ministry of the Holy Spirit of God to sanctify the souls of men. This is his assigned labor in the Eternal Godhead. How he does it we do not know, except that it is a work that can only be performed by a spirit being, and hence the need for one of his personality, status, and standing in the Supreme Presidency of the universe.



Baptism of the Spirit is the way and the means whereby sanctification is made available. Thus, Jesus commands all the “ends of the earth” to be baptized in water “that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day” (3 Nephi 27:20.) Truly, the Holy Ghost is a sanctifier, and the extent to which men receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost is the extent to which they are sanctified. In the lives of most of us, sanctification is an ongoing process, and we obtain that glorious status by degrees as we overcome the world and become saints in deed as well as in name. (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, pp. 265-266)

### *Sacrament Renews the Cleansing Effect of Atonement*

#### **Dallin H. Oaks**

The close relationship between partaking of the sacrament and the companionship of the Holy Ghost is explained in the revealed prayer on the sacrament. In partaking of the bread, we witness that we are willing to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ and always remember Him and keep His commandments. When we do so, we have the promise that we will always have His Spirit to be with us (see D&C 20:77).

To have the continuous companionship of the Holy Ghost is the most precious possession we can have in mortality. The *gift* of the Holy Ghost was conferred upon us by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood after our baptism. But to realize the blessings of that gift, we must keep ourselves free from sin. When we commit sin, we become unclean and the Spirit of the Lord withdraws from us. The Spirit of the Lord does not dwell in “unholy temples” (see Mosiah 2:36–37; Alma 34:35–36; Hel. 4:24), and no unclean thing can dwell in His presence

(see Eph. 5:5; 1 Ne. 10:21; Alma 7:21; Moses 6:57).

A few weeks ago I used a chain saw to cut down a tree in my backyard. It was a dirty job, and when I was done I was splattered with a filthy mixture of sawdust and oil. In that condition I did not want anyone to see me. I just wanted to be cleansed in water so I would again feel comfortable in the presence of other people.

Not one of you young men and not one of your leaders has lived without sin since his baptism. Without some provision for further cleansing after our baptism, each of us is lost to things spiritual. We cannot have the companionship of the Holy Ghost, and at the final judgment we would be bound to be “cast off forever” (1 Ne. 10:21). How grateful we are that the Lord has provided a process for each baptized member of His Church to be periodically cleansed from the soil of sin. The sacrament is an essential part of that process.

We are commanded to repent of our sins and to come to the Lord with a brokenheart and a contrite spirit and partake of the sacrament in compliance with its covenants. When we renew our baptismal covenants in this way, the Lord renews the cleansing effect of our baptism. In this way we are made clean and can always have His Spirit to be with us. The importance of this is evident in the Lord’s commandment that we partake of the sacrament each week (see D&C 59:8–9).

We cannot overstate the importance of the Aaronic Priesthood in this. All of these vital steps pertaining to the remission of sins are performed through the saving ordinance of baptism and the renewing ordinance of the sacrament. ...

The Aaronic Priesthood holds the keys of the “gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins” (D&C 84:27). The cleansing power of our Savior’s Atonement is renewed for us as we partake of the sacrament. (“The Aaronic Priesthood and the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, pp. 38, 40)

## *What If There Were No Atonement?*

#### **Richard G. Scott**

I testify that except for the Atonement of the Holy Redeemer, the demands of justice would prevent every soul born on earth from returning to the presence of God, to partake of His glory and exaltation, for all make mistakes for which we cannot personally appease justice. I witness that except for the “infinite atonement” of Christ, we could not return to God at death and, as Jacob solemnly warned, “our spirits [would] become subject to ... the devil, to rise no more. And our spirits [would] become like unto him, and we [would] become devils,

angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, ... to remain with the father of lies, in misery” [2 Ne. 9:7–9]. (“Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer,” *Ensign*, May 1997, p. 53)

#### **Bruce R. McConkie**

[In this quotation, Elder McConkie reviews the scriptures regarding the question, “What if there were not Atonement?”] If there were no creation, we would not be, neither the earth, nor any life thereon. All things, in effect, would vanish away. And if there were no

atonement, the purposes of creation would be frustrated; man would remain lost and fallen forever; there would be no resurrection nor eternal life; Adam and all his posterity would be as Lucifer, cast out, damned, without hope, lost forever.

The Book of Mormon prophets have made these things exceedingly clear. In plain words, as they proclaimed the infinite glories of the atonement, they have affirmed such things as: "Were it not for the atonement, which God himself shall make for the sins and iniquities of his people, they must unavoidably perish. For . . . there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God." (Mosiah 13:28, 32; 15:19; 16:4; Jacob 7:12.) "There could be no redemption for mankind save it were through the death and sufferings of Christ, and the atonement of his blood." (Alma 21:9.)

Indeed, it is Nephi's brother Jacob to whom we turn for what is probably the clearest explanation found in any scripture now extant for the doctrinal explanation as to why all men would be lost if there were no atonement. "Our flesh must waste away and die," he says, which fact is one of the truisms of life. Then he puts death in its true perspective in the eternal plan with this explanation: "For as death hath passed upon all men, to fulfil the merciful plan of the great Creator, there must needs be a power of resurrection, and the resurrection must needs come unto man by reason of the fall; and the fall came by reason of transgression; and because man became fallen they were cut off from the presence of the Lord." (2 Ne. 9:4-6.) Thus, Adam accomplished his mission to fall and create the need for a Redeemer.

What then of redemption, of the promised deliverance, of the expiatory sacrifice of Him who did no sin, "who layeth down his life according to the flesh, and taketh it again by the power of the Spirit, that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead"? (2 Ne. 2:8.) Of his sinless sacrifice Jacob said: "It must needs be an infinite atonement—save it should be an infinite atonement this corruption could not put on incorruption." (2 Ne. 9:7.) Save for the infinite power of this, the most selfless act ever performed, Paul would never have been able to write of man's body: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:42-44.)

Save for this atonement, Jacob continues, "the first judgment which came upon man" – his banishment from the presence of the Lord because he transgressed the law and partook of the forbidden fruit, and also the natural death that attends his newly found mortal state – "must

needs have remained to an endless duration. And if so, this flesh must have laid down to rot and to crumble to its mother earth, to rise no more." (2 Ne. 9:7.) There would have been no resurrection, no immortality, no reunion of body and spirit, no victory over the grave – nothing but endless death.

"But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things." (2 Ne. 2:24.) The purposes of the Almighty neither have been nor can be frustrated. The fall was part of his plan; he designed and decreed it from the beginning. Its gloom is to turn into joy and gladness as both temporal and spiritual death are abolished in Gethsemane and on Calvary. And so Jacob exclaims: "O the wisdom of God, his mercy and grace! For behold, if the flesh should rise no more our spirits must become subject to that angel who fell from before the presence of the Eternal God, and became the devil, to rise no more." (2 Ne. 9:8.) Subject to whom? To Lucifer, the traitor and rebel who defied Deity and spread the woes of war in the heavenly courts. Christ is now our King and we worship him because we will it so. Had there been no atonement Lucifer would have been our eternal head and we would have worshipped him because he willed it so. Agency and freedom would have ceased for all those whom God had sired.

But this is not all. Jacob continues: "And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself." (2 Ne. 9:9.) Devils! Angels to a devil! Damned souls, denied a grave, denied a resurrection, purposeless creatures in whose souls the light we once had would become darkness!

"God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people." (Mosiah 15:1.) He shall redeem them from that (otherwise) everlasting death which is the grave, and that (otherwise) everlasting death which is eternal, abysmal darkness where none of the light of heaven is found, and where they would have no choice but to grovel before the Angel of Darkness. Ought we not, then, as did our friend Jacob, extol our Redeemer and Savior in such words of doctrine and beauty as these:

"O how great the goodness of our God, who prepareth a way for our escape from the grasp of this awful monster; yea, that monster, death and hell, which I call the death of the body, and also the death of the spirit.

"And because of the way of deliverance of our God, the Holy One of Israel, this death, of which I have spoken, which is the temporal, shall deliver up its dead;

which death is the grave.

“And this death of which I have spoken, which is the spiritual death, shall deliver up its dead; which spiritual death is hell; wherefore, death and hell must deliver up their dead, and hell must deliver up its captive spirits, and the grave must deliver up its captive bodies, and the bodies and the spirits of men will be restored one to the other; and it is by the power of the resurrection of the Holy One of Israel.

“O how great the plan of our God! For on the other hand, the paradise of God must deliver up the spirits of

the righteous, and the grave deliver up the body of the righteous; and the spirit and the body is restored to itself again, and all men become incorruptible, and immortal, and they are living souls, having a perfect knowledge like unto us in the flesh, save it be that our knowledge shall be perfect.

“O the greatness of the mercy of our God, the Holy One of Israel! For he delivereth his saints from that awful monster the devil, and death, and hell, and that lake of fire and brimstone, which is endless torment.” (2 Ne. 9:10-13, 19) [From *The Promised Messiah*, pp. 227-230]

## *The Kingdoms of Glory Are the End Result of the Atonement*

### **John 14**

2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

### **Neal A. Maxwell**

Only a few (and these are they who were once privileged of the Lord but who, in mortality, betrayed the

Lord) will not receive a kingdom of glory. Though differing dramatically in degree, the end results of the atonement of Jesus Christ include everlasting life in the telestial kingdom, which is still a kingdom of glory. Better still will be the terrestrial kingdom; and, of course, the most prized of all, the celestial kingdom. (*But for a Small Moment*, p.116)

## *Common Mistakes in Applying the Atonement*

### **Neal A. Maxwell**

Now, we often make some common mistakes when applying the Atonement in our lives. I will mention several. God leaves us free to make these very mistakes. Yet each of these mistakes reflects a greater need for our personal submissiveness.

First, we make a mistake when we think we own ourselves and that we own blocks of time. It's a natural thing to do. But our faith in God includes faith in God's timing, enough to be able to say, in effect, “Thy *timing* be done” (see D&C 64:32).

We make another mistake when we fail to realize how much serious discipleship consists of downsizing our egos and diminishing our selfishness! The bloated natural man will resist any downsizing. But meekness is what has to happen.

Another mistake we can make is that we maybe don't take life's little quizzes seriously enough. We think we will cram and pass the final exam! The infinite Atonement is there for our finite mistakes, including the daily mistakes we tend to make. It is understandable, of course, that we focus on the crunch times in our lives.

We are mindful of these spikes of suffering and stress, and we sometimes, ironically, let ourselves become overcome by relentless routineness—with what might be called the daily dampening of things spiritual.

We make another mistake. We fail to focus on and to develop *patience* as well as *faith* (see Mosiah 23:21). These two attributes are in tandem; they go together. By the way, if we are meek, being *tried* means being *developed*. We don't look at impatience in terms of its downside. When we are impatient, in effect, we do not honor what is implied in the words “in process of time.” We foolishly wish to have some of life's moments over and done with, seasons to be over with, ignoring the possibilities for service that are inherent in them. We are somewhat like airline passengers in America who fly coast to coast and resent the space in between; but there are *souls* down there, not just *sagebrush*! Yet we want to fly over some experiences. It is so likely we will miss the chance to be of service. So it is with life's seeming in-between and routine spaces! Impatience puts us at risk.

We may feel put upon by events and circumstances—another mistake we can make when not

approaching the Atonement properly. Yet many of these things that we feel put upon by actually constitute the customized curricula needed for our personal development. Still, our tendency is to push away the necessary and prescribed courses of spiritual calisthenics. We can't withdraw from all of life's courses and still really stay enrolled in school!

Another mistake we make is that we foolishly think we are free to choose, without wanting the consequences of those choices! (see Alma 29:4). Bainville, the French philosopher, said, "One must want the consequences of what one wants."

Another mistake commonly made is that we play to the mortal galleries! We listen too much to the wrong peers. There is what I call the mystic "they," who for some become ascendant. In terms of the choices they make, they want to please the mystic "they." We see this

politically, in the corporate world, in academic life, and so on.

Some people are so anxious to be politically correct and to conform to the fashions of the world! What is worse, however, is when we see members of the Church try to conform eternal truths to the ways and thinking of the world. But it won't work! As Paul warned, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). It is a terrible mistake for us to try to please the world by twisting and conforming things that won't fit in the secular matrix.

Now, these mistakes are but a few we make; they keep us from fully applying the Atonement to our lives. They are not worthy of Jesus and what He accomplished in Gethsemane and on Calvary! ("The Holy Ghost: Glorifying Christ," *Ensign*, July 2002, pp.56-57)

## *Further Important Teachings Regarding the Atonement*

### *God Knew the Iniquities of Man Before the World Was Created*

#### **Joseph Smith**

The great Jehovah contemplated the whole of the events connected with the earth, pertaining to the plan of salvation, before it rolled into existence, or ever "the morning stars sang together" for joy; the past, the present, and the future were and are, with Him, one eternal "now;" He knew of the fall of Adam, the iniquities of the antediluvians, of the depth of iniquity that would be connected with the human family, their weakness and strength, their power and glory, apostasies, their crimes, their righteousness and iniquity; He comprehended the fall of man, and his redemption; He knew the plan of salvation and pointed it out; He was acquainted with the situation of all nations and with their destiny; He ordered all things according to the council of His own will; He knows the situation of both the living and the dead, and has made ample provision for their redemption, according to their several circumstances, and the laws of the kingdom of God, whether in this world, or in the world to come. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 220)

#### **Neal A. Maxwell**

Of course, the Father knew beforehand of all human wickedness. He knew beforehand of mankind's need of

a Savior. He knows the past, present, and future, since all their dimensions are continually before Him, said the Prophet Joseph Smith, constituting "one eternal 'now'" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 220; see also 1 Ne. 10:19; D&C 3:2; 35:1). Therefore, mortal sins previously committed and those yet to be committed were atoned for *retroactively* and *prospectively* in Gethsemane and on Calvary. For us of the last dispensation, it was "paid in advance," as it were. However, the individual sinner is still left with his own need to claim that divine payment by meeting the conditions set by Christ, thus working through those sins, as prescribed, by currently applying the atoning blood of Jesus. (*One More Strain of Praise* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1999], p. 47)

### *Justice Demands Atonement*

#### **Joseph Fielding Smith**

Adam's transgression brought these two deaths: spiritual and temporal—man being banished from the presence of God, and also becoming mortal and subject to all the ills of the flesh. In order that he should be brought back again, there had to be a reparation of the broken law. Justice demanded it.

The fall brought death. That is not a desirable condition. We do not want to be banished from the

presence of God. We do not want to be subject forever to mortal conditions. We do not want to die and have our bodies turn to dust, and the spirits that possess these bodies by right, turned over to the realm of Satan and become subject to him.

But that was the condition; and if Christ had not come as the atoning sacrifice, in demand of the law of justice, to repair or to atone or to redeem us from the condition that Adam found himself in, and that we find ourselves in; then mortal death would have come; the body would have gone back to the dust from where it came; the spirit would have gone into the realms of Satan's domain, and have been subject to him forever. Justice demanded that the law which was broken be repaired. Justice demanded that by the giving of life Adam and his posterity will be brought back into the presence of God. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:122)

*Few to Gain Full  
"At-one-ment" With God*

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

We often hear the word atonement defined as being "at-one-ment" with God. That is a very small part of it. In fact, *the great majority of mankind never becomes one with God, although they receive the atonement.* "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." We do not all become "at one" with God, if we mean that we are brought back again and given the fulness of life which is promised to those who keep the commandments of God and become sons and daughters of God. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:125)

*The Atonement Insures God's Purposes  
Will Be Brought to Pass*

**Neal A. Maxwell**

Furthermore, because the centerpiece of the Atonement is already in place, we know that everything else in God's plan will likewise finally succeed. God is surely able to do His own work! (See 2 Ne. 27:20–21.) In His plans for the human family, long ago God made ample provision for all mortal mistakes. His purposes will all triumph and without abrogating man's moral agency. Moreover, all His purposes will come to pass in their time. (See D&C 64:32.) ["Put Off the Natural Man, and Come Off Conqueror," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, p. 15]

*Atonement—A Vicarious Sacrifice*

**Joseph Fielding Smith**

The whole plan of redemption is based on vicarious sacrifice, One without sin standing for the whole human family, all of whom were under the curse. It is most natural and just that he who commits the wrong should pay the penalty—atone for his wrongdoing. Therefore, when Adam was the transgressor of the law, justice demanded that he, and none else, should answer for the sin and pay the penalty with his life.

But Adam, in breaking the law, himself became subject to the curse, and being under the curse could not atone for or undo, what he had done. Neither could his children, for they also were under the curse, and it required one who was not subject to the curse to atone for that original sin. Moreover, since we were all under the curse, we were also powerless to atone for our individual sins.

It, therefore, became necessary for the Father to send his Only Begotten Son, who was free from sin, to atone for our sins as well as for Adam's transgression, which justice demanded should be done. He accordingly offered himself a sacrifice for sins, and through his death upon the cross took upon himself both Adam's transgression and our individual sins, thereby redeeming us from the fall, and from our sins, on condition of repentance. (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:126)

*Atonement Was Accomplished  
By the Savior's Agency*

**Boyd K. Packer**

The Lord had come from Gethsemane; before Him was His crucifixion. At the moment of betrayal, Peter drew his sword against Malchus, a servant of the high priest. Jesus said:

"Put up again thy sword into his place. ...

"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:52–53).

During all of the taunting, the abuse, the scourging, and the final torture of crucifixion, the Lord remained silent and submissive. Except, that is, for one moment of intense drama which reveals the very essence of Christian doctrine.

That moment came during the trial. Pilate, now afraid, said to Jesus: "Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" (John 19:10).

One can only imagine the quiet majesty when the Lord spoke. "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11).

What happened thereafter did not come because

Pilate had power to impose it, but because the Lord had the will to accept it.

“I lay down my life,” the Lord said, “that I might take it again.

“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17–18).

Before the Crucifixion and afterward, many men have willingly given their lives in selfless acts of heroism. But none faced what the Christ endured. Upon Him was the burden of all human transgression, all human guilt.

And hanging in the balance was the Atonement. Through His willing act, mercy and justice could be reconciled, eternal law sustained, and that mediation achieved without which mortal man could not be redeemed.

He, by choice, accepted the penalty for all mankind for the sum total of all wickedness and depravity; for brutality, immorality, perversion, and corruption; for addiction; for the killings and torture and terror—for all of it that ever had been or all that ever would be enacted upon this earth.

In choosing, He faced the awesome power of the evil one who was not confined to flesh nor subject to mortal pain. That was Gethsemane! ...

The cost of the Atonement was borne by the Lord without compulsion, for agency is a sovereign principle. (“Atonement, Agency, Accountability,” *Ensign*, May 1988, pp. 69-70)

### *Perfection Possible Only Through the Atonement*

#### **James E. Faust**

“What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am,” said the Savior (3 Ne. 27:27). Because of the perfect Atonement of Jesus, we may be made perfect (see D&C 76:69). [“That We Might Know Thee,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1999, p. 4]

The most difficult of all challenges given to us is, “I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” [3 Ne. 12:48]. Perfection is an eternal goal. While we cannot be perfect in mortality, striving for it is a commandment, which ultimately, through the Atonement, we can keep. ( “This Is Our Day,” *Ensign*, May 1999, p. 19)

#### **Russell M. Nelson**

Eventually the time will come when each “spirit and

... body shall be reunited again in ... perfect form; both limb and joint shall be restored to its proper frame” [Alma 11:43; see also Alma 40:23; Eccl. 12:7; D&C 138:17]. Then, thanks to the Atonement of Jesus Christ, we can become perfected in Him [Moro. 10:32]. (“We Are Children of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, p. 87)

### *Atonement Can Wash Away All Corrosive Effects of Sin*

#### **Henry B. Eyring**

Later, he was my more-than-70-year-old district missionary companion. I asked the people we were teaching, as I testified of the power of the Savior’s Atonement, to look at him. He had been washed clean and given a new heart, and I knew they would see that in his face. I told the people that what they saw was evidence that the Atonement of Jesus Christ could wash away all the corrosive effects of sin. (“Do Not Delay,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, p. 35)

### *Christ’s Atonement Can Raise Us Above All Things*

#### **Robert D. Hales**

We read in the Doctrine and Covenants that the Savior “comprehendeth all things, and all things are before him, and all things are round about him; and he is above all things” (D&C 88:41). President Wilford Woodruff, when teaching of the Savior, said, “I have always looked upon the life of our Savior -- who descended beneath all things that He might rise above all things—as an example for His followers” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham [1946], 4). It was necessary that Jesus should descend below all things by living in mortality, in order that He might raise others above all things through the Atonement. (“Return with Honor,” *Ensign*, June 1999, p. 9)

### *Atonement Also Benefits Those Who Are Sinned Against*

#### **James E. Faust**

The Atonement not only benefits the sinner but also benefits those sinned against—that is, the victims. By forgiving “those who trespass against us” (JST, Matt. 6:13) the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort to those who have been innocently victimized by the sins of others. The basic source for the healing of the soul is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. This is true

whether it be from the pain of a personal tragedy or a terrible national calamity such as we have recently experienced in New York and Washington, D.C., and near Pittsburgh.

A sister who had been through a painful divorce wrote of her experience in drawing from the Atonement. She said: "Our divorce ... did not release me from the obligation to forgive. I truly wanted to do it, but it was as if I had been commanded to do something of which I was simply incapable." Her bishop gave her some sound advice: "Keep a place in your heart for forgiveness, and when it comes, welcome it in." Many months passed as this struggle to forgive continued. She recalled: "During those long, prayerful moments ... I tapped into a life-giving source of comfort from my loving Heavenly Father. I sense that he was not standing by glaring at me for not having accomplished forgiveness yet; rather he was sorrowing with me as I wept. ...

"In the final analysis, what happened in my heart is for me an amazing and miraculous evidence of the Atonement of Christ. I had always viewed the Atonement as a means of making repentance work for the sinner. I had not realized that it also makes it possible for the one sinned against to receive into his or her heart the sweet peace of forgiving." [Name Withheld, "My Journey to Forgiving," *Ensign*, Feb. 1997, 42–43].

The injured should do what they can to work through their trials, and the Savior will "succor his people according to their infirmities" [Alma 7:12]. He will help us carry our burdens. Some injuries are so hurtful and deep that they cannot be healed without help from a higher power and hope for perfect justice and restitution in the next life. Since the Savior has suffered anything and everything that we could ever feel or experience, [Alma 7:11] He can help the weak to become stronger. He has personally experienced all of it. He understands our pain and will walk with us even in our darkest hours. ("The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, pp. 18ff)

### *We Do Not Have the Right to Judge Someone Unfit for the Atonement*

#### **Dallin H. Oaks**

A righteous judgment must, by definition, be intermediate. It will refrain from declaring that a person has been assured of exaltation or from dismissing a person as being irrevocably bound for hellfire. It will refrain from declaring that a person has forfeited all opportunity for exaltation or even all opportunity for a useful role in the work of the Lord. The gospel is a

gospel of hope, and none of us is authorized to deny the power of the Atonement to bring about a cleansing of individual sins, forgiveness, and a reformation of life on appropriate conditions. ( " 'Judge Not' and Judging," *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, p. 9)

### *Repentance Made Possible Through Atonement*

#### **Joseph B. Wirthlin**

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ motivates us to repent. Through repentance, made possible by the Lord's Atonement, we can feel the calming peace of forgiveness for our sins, weaknesses, and mistakes. ("Cultivating Divine Attributes," *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, p. 26)

#### **Henry B. Eyring**

The truth is that we all need repentance. If we are capable of reason and past the age of eight, we all need the cleansing that comes through applying the full effects of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. ("Do Not Delay," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, p. 34)

### *Atonement Will Resolve All Inequities of Life*

#### **Richard G. Scott**

The Atonement will not only help us overcome our transgressions and mistakes, but in His time, it will resolve all inequities of life – those things that are unfair which are the consequences of circumstance or others' acts and not our own decisions. ("Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer," *Ensign*, May 1997, p. 54)

### *Man's Nature Can Be Changed Through the Atonement*

#### **Henry B. Eyring**

The fruit of keeping covenants is the companionship of the Holy Ghost and an increase in the power to love. That happens because of the power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ to change our very natures. ("Witnesses for God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 32)

#### **Merrill J. Bateman**

The greatest miracle of the Atonement is the power Jesus Christ has to change our character if we come to Him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. ... I bear witness that obedience to the gospel plan is the only way to build a Christ-centered life. The first step is to have

faith, to believe and live so that one receives a personal witness of the reality of the Father and the Son, of the gospel plan, and of the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. As faith grows, one is free to forget self and serve others. Service is the second step to a Christlike existence, a key part of the Lord's refining process. The blessings of service are love, increased faith, patience, and other qualities of the divine nature. Finally, enduring trials and tribulations with a soft heart made possible by faith brings one closer to Christ. If our hearts are prepared, the Holy Ghost can infuse divine qualities in us—even when we are in the midst of adversity—through the power of the Atonement. (“Living a Christ-Centered Life,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1999, pp. 12–13)

*Because of the Atonement,  
Christ Will Be Our Judge*

**Neal A. Maxwell**

Multiple revelations teach us that redeeming Jesus is

uniquely our “advocate with the Father,” that He pleads for us, and that He makes intercession for us (see 1 Jn. 2:1; 2 Ne. 2:9; Mosiah 5:8; D&C 32:3; 45:3; 62:1; 110:4). Without this grand reality we would be helpless, and all would be truly and finally hopeless.

Jesus' personal role is unique in yet another way: “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” ( John 5:22). “Jesus, our Redeemer,” has earned this special standing, entitling Him not only to plead for us but also to judge us, which His unique suffering made possible by virtue of His agonies during the Atonement (see Mosiah 15:8; D&C 45:35). Thus, by His suffering and by divine investiture, in one sense Jesus is both advocate and judge!

Only an omniscient, all-loving God could have both roles of advocate (pleading for the petitioner) and judge (deciding the ultimate fate of the petitioner). This is because He possesses a perfect balance of the qualities of justice and mercy and all other divine attributes that make Him perfect, or complete, in all the Godly virtues. (*One More Strain of Praise* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1999], p. 33)