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## “The Power Is In Them”

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Life is full of the unexpected and the idea that I would be invited to address an organization that has among its numbers doctors is not to be found even in the most colorful parts of my imagination. I take both comfort and direction from the fact that the word “doctor” means “teacher” and that which he or she teaches is supposed to be “doctrine.” (John Ayto, *Dictionary of Word Origins*, 178)

### Agency

It is on those terms that I address you taking up first the doctrine of agency. There is no doctrine more fundamental to a sound understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the healing process. I would also like to make a few observations about pain and the important part it plays in that process.

In the Grand Council of heaven the Father having explained the Plan of Salvation and the necessity of a redeeming sacrifice asked, “Whom shall I send?” not “What shall I do?” He was not seeking counsel as to whom he should send but rather allowing the one to be sent to do so voluntarily.

Indeed, none of us participated in the formation of the Plan of Salvation nor will any of us be called upon to make suggestions as to how it ought to be modified.

He whom we know as the Christ stepped forward in that great Council and gave the perfect answer to his Father’s question. “Here am I,” he said, “send me” (Abraham 3:27). He then added, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2).

The story constitutes a perfect illustration of the principle of agency. It centers in a free will offering and the unrestrained desire to do the will of the Father.

It is our practice in the Church to define agency as the “right of choice.” No dictionary that I have been able to find sustains such a definition. Dictionaries uniformly tell us that “agency” is the “power to act.” That may embrace the “right of choice” but it reaches far beyond it. It is one thing to talk the talk and quite another to walk the walk.

We all have problems that we would choose not to have. Agency is the power to act in such a way as to do something about them. This can only be done through the application of correct principles. There simply is no significant research sustaining the value of throwing a dime into a wishing well.

“From the beginning,” that is even from the pre-earth life, Satan has sought to destroy the agency of man (Moses 4:3). His efforts are well directed, without agency there can be no salvation. In this life his primary weapons in doing so are addiction--which is the surrender of agency--and the most damning of lies which is that you and I were “born that way and there is nothing that we can do about it.” Such a notion denies the principle of agency, the Atonement of Christ, and the purpose of our birth.

The concept of agency is among the “plain and precious truths” taken from both the Old and New Testaments. Joseph Smith’s first exposure to the doctrine came in the translation of the Book of Mormon. Having taught the doctrine of the Fall, Lehi immediately tells us:

*The Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall. And because that they are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever, knowing good from evil; to act for themselves and not to be acted upon, save it be by the punishment of the law at the great and last day, according to the commandments which God hath given.*

*Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. (2 Nephi 2:26-27)*

Thus from Lehi we learn that in and through the Atonement we are empowered to “act” rather than be “acted upon,” to be free rather than be captives. Let it be noted that none are exempt from the effects of the Fall and none are excluded from the blessings of the Atonement if they act in harmony with the laws of heaven.

### Receiving the Light

A single phrase in a revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith greatly expands this doctrine. Speaking to the Saints who first gathered in Missouri the Lord said, “For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves” (D&C 58:28).

It is the phrase “the power is in them” that leaps out to command our attention. What we are learning here is that there is a power within us, it is a gift from God, it will

enable us to do all manner of things that we would not have supposed we could do.

We misrepresent agency when we suggest it is the “right” to do whatever we choose. You do not have a God given right to do that which is evil. You have the ability, you have the capacity, but you do not have the “right.” That is contrary to the meaning of the word “right,” which is to act in a “righteous way.”

In another revelation given to the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord stated the matter thus:

*Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the beginning is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light.*

*And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation. (D&C 93:31-32)*

Agency, as here defined, is the “right” to stand in the light, to accept and follow truth. To reject the light is to be “under condemnation.”

### **How Agency Functions**

In one of our great revelations on the priesthood the Lord said:

*Wherefore, now let every man learn his duty, and to act in the office in which he is appointed, in all diligence.*

*He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. (D&C 107:99-100)*

Notice that the text directs us to “let every man learn his duty.” That is quite different from saying “teach every man his duty.” Could the idea here be that we ought to get out of the way and “let” people draw from within and that their experience coupled with the companionship of the Holy Ghost will teach them more than any handbook you or I could write?

Consider a second text. In D&C 124 we have a marvelous revelation directing the building of the Nauvoo Temple. It reads in part as follows:

*And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people;*

*For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times (D&C 124:40-41).*

The revelation of the temple ceremony was given years before the temple was built. This revelation is not directed to the Prophet but to the general membership of the Church. It is your revelation and mine. It stands independent of office and calling.

The Prophet, the man who stands at the head of the Church and kingdom of God, holds the “keys of the mystery of those things which have been sealed” (D&C 35:18).

The word “mystery” as used in scripture refers to divine truths that are “hidden” or kept “secret” they are associated with “religious rites.” (*The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 601). My *Analytical Concordance*, tells me that the word “mystery” comes from a Greek word meaning “that which is known only to the initiated.” (*Young’s Analytical Concordance*, p. 683).

All gospel ordinances are what we might call “key words” that is they unlock to those who participate in them knowledge and understanding that they cannot otherwise have.

Take the ordinance of baptism as an example. After the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood and after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery had baptized each other, Joseph said:

*Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understanding, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of. (JS-H 1:74).*

This has nothing to do with an office. You cannot hold an office in a non-existing organization. It would be nearly a year before the Church was organized. We are dealing here with the promise of personal revelation not institutional revelation.

It is a profoundly significant thing that the Sacramental pray and all the ordinances of salvation center in language that must be rendered exactly. Those performing the ordinances can neither add too nor take from that language. This assures that every member of the Church makes precisely the same covenants and that he or she becomes the rightful heir to the same blessings.

When the Melchizedek Priesthood was restored it brought with it the power to confer upon each member of the Church the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The role of the Holy Ghost is two fold, to confirm institution revelation; for instance, the divine origin of the Book of Mormon; and second, to give individual revelation according to our particular needs. The idea is that the Holy Ghost reveals things to us and through us.

The thrust of all this is that in the seeking of answers, direction, and strength, we generally look in the wrong direction. We are looking “out” when we should be looking “in.” To have been foreordained to a particular office or calling was also to have been trained and prepared for that office and calling. Would you not suppose that the preparation we received in the pre-earth life included that which was individual and personal to both what we would be called to do and what we would be called to overcome. (D&C 138:56)

Let me illustrate. As a young man sometime in the years between my mission and marriage I sat in my father’s office waiting for a ride home. My father was at his desk, he was dictating some letters. His back was turned to me. In the midst of his dictation he stopped, put the Dictaphone down and turn to me.

He said, "Son, come stand in front of my desk." I did so. He then said, "Stand at attention." I did so. He then said, "When the day comes that you are stood at attention in front of a desk like this and railed on for something that was not your fault you just take it, offer no excuses, just assume responsibility for what happened, you just take it he repeated." He then asked, "Do you understand?"

I responded with a "Yes, Sir" and a salute. He said, "You are dismissed." He turned around and continued his dictation. Nothing more was ever said on the matter. None of my brothers or sisters had a like experience with our Father. They did not need it. I did.

A few years later, while serving as an LDS Chaplain in Vietnam, I was summoned out of the field one afternoon to stand at attention in front of a desk like the one in my father's office. Seated behind the desk were two men—one had a star on his shoulders the other had two stars on his shoulders.

They were angry, course, and rude. They dressed me down rather unmercifully for what seemed an eternity. It seems that another LDS Chaplain had finagled a way to get home two months early and they needed to take their anger out on someone.

When they finally ran out of ugly things to say I told them that I had never met the man in question but that he was a member of my Church and that I assumed responsibility for what he had done. I apologized for his behavior. I then volunteered to fill the time he had left un-served and asked these two generals to help me make the necessary arrangements.

They were confounded by my response. After a long silence the senior officer said, "You are dismissed."

My first assignment in the military was to attend an officers training course at Fort Hamilton in New York. There were one hundred of us in the class; 99 graduates of divinity schools and a Mormon boy. The officers teaching the class and many of my class mates made it plain that they did not think I had the necessary training to be there.

The night before I left for Vietnam we had a family night at my parent's home. Dad cut the lesson short with the announcement that he wanted to give a father's blessings to his sons. My three younger brothers were present.

Each blessings was uniquely fitted to the one being blessed. My brothers were given promises that I could not help but envy. Having previously received such a blessing I had no expectation of receiving another though the prayer in my heart was that I would. Having blessed my brothers my father then invited me to receive a blessing.

That blessing constituted my training manual. It instructed me to take no thought before hand as to what I would say or do and that it would in each instance be given to me.

After my arrival in Vietnam I was soon to learn that my fellow chaplains were quick to defer difficult situations to me. I was grateful they did. I had confidence in the promise

given me and knew that no school of divinity could confer a like promise upon them.

I never received so much as a single sentence of instruction relative to my responsibilities in representing the Church as a chaplain, nor was I ever asked for any kind of a report on my activities. It was for me to "learn my duty" and to "stand in the office" to which I had been called.

From the age of eight I had had the companionship of the Holy Ghost. At the age of twelve I had received the Aaronic Priesthood, when I was nineteen I was given the Melchizedek Priesthood and taken to the House of the Lord where I was endowed with power from on high. By the time I was twenty-one I had served two years as a missionary. No one in that Officers Training course could match the training I had received.

The unit to which I was assigned was base camped in the southern part of the country. Our District President was an Air Force chaplain by the name of Farrell Smith. I served as his first counselor. As chaplains we were responsible to meet the spiritual needs of the military unit to which we were assigned and then given area coverage to look after our LDS service men wherever we might find them.

Time will not permit me to describe the nature of the problems we faced. Suffice it to say they reached far beyond our experience.

We were extremely pleased when we received word that Victor Brown, the Presiding Bishop of the Church, was on his way to visit with us. We were to travel with him from one end of the country to the other meeting with as many of our servicemen's groups as possible.

We quickly made the arrangements; I cite but one example. We needed a pilot who could commandeer either a chopper or fixed wing aircraft and be able to fly at a moments notice.

For such arrangements we by-passed the military chain of command and dealt with a higher authority. We had our own Mormon Airlines staffed by faithful Latter-day Saint pilots. We were always able to get where we needed to go.

Chaplain Smith and I then sat in council together. We made a list of the questions we wanted to ask our visiting authority. We divided them up and committed them to memory.

When the times and places of our meeting were announced our servicemen came from all over the country. We held meetings on the side of runways, in bunkers and ditches. We held meetings with the ground rumbling beneath our feet and the sound of large guns thundering over our heads. In some instances we were even able to meet in small military chapels.

Between meetings as soon as we were airborne Chaplain Smith and I would take turns asking Bishop Brown questions. His counsel was wise but it quickly became more than evident what we were doing and he called a sharp halt to our questioning.

He said, "Brethren, I am going to tell you a story. You won't like it but it is a great story."

He then proceeded with his story and as he had anticipated we did not like it. The story centered around a young man who had a very difficult problem. He did not know what to do and so he visited with his Bishop.

The Bishop listened carefully and thoughtfully. He asked a few questions to assure that he understood all that was involved. He then confessed he had no idea what counsel to give but told the young man that he would be meeting with the Stake President the next evening and that he would present the matter to him.

The next evening the Bishop met with the Stake President. He explained the young man's problem. The Stake president listened attentively and asked a few questions to assure he understood all that was involved. He then said, "Bishop, I have no idea what to tell you, but tomorrow I will be meeting with a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. I will present the matter to him."

The next day as he met with the member of the Quorum of the Twelve the Stake President raised the matter. The Apostle listened attentively and asked a few questions to assure that he fully understood what was involved. He then said, "President, I have no idea what to tell you, but this afternoon I will be meeting with President McKay. I will ask him."

That afternoon the member of the Quorum of the Twelve met with President McKay and carefully explained the problem. President McKay listened attentively and asked a few questions to assure that he understood all that was involved and then said, "Well, that's his problem isn't it."

Such was the story. We thought the ending a little abrupt. We had expected a great line, something we could chisel in stone; instead we got one of those drab old truths that require character.

The story brought an end to our question session and the beginning of the realization that our problems were ours and it was for us to solve them. That is why the Lord placed us there.

### **For What Were We Trained?**

We have a remarkable revelation in which the Lord said that all things were spiritual unto him and that at no time had he given a commandment that was temporal (D&C 29:34). Speaking of father Adam he said:

*Behold, I gave unto him that he should be an agent unto himself; and I gave unto him commandments, but no temporal commandment gave I unto him, for my commandments are spiritual; they are not natural nor temporal, neither carnal nor sensual. (D&C 29:35)*

This revelation is telling us that it does not matter what the nature of the problem we face is the principles that direct our response are the same. That is that we are agents unto ourselves and the power is in us to come of victorious.

The same principles that apply to the ailing body apply in like manner to the ailing spirit. Let me illustrate taking as a case in point the pain and suffering felt by Latter-day Saint families whose number includes someone who struggles with same-sex attraction.

### **The Family, Pain, and Healing**

As you are aware pain stands as a sentinel to warn us against danger and as a guard to prevent unnecessary harm or hurt. Yet, it can also be used as a weapon to manipulate or force people into doing what they would not otherwise do.

Pain can be our servant or our master. It is for us to choose which it will be. Properly used it becomes an agent of healing. Improperly used it becomes an instrument of self-destruction.

Most pain is shared pain. The pain of a sick child is shared by its parents and family. The pain of a husband or wife is shared by their spouse.

The very nature of our birth illustrates that it was not intended for any of us to go through life alone. We were born helpless and dependant, we live only because others have sacrificed for us. So it is that if your child suffers you suffer with them, and so with all those you love. The idea finds expression in weddings and funerals where family and friends gather together to support each other in times of rejoicing or mourning. It is in the nurturing power of the family that we turn to find the power of healing.

This shared pain can erase the line between this life and the next. Angels, of whom we will speak more, are not faceless, they are of our race; they are our kindred and as such feel our pain and our joy. Teaching this principle Joseph Smith declared, "The spirits of the just . . . are not far from us, and know and understand our thoughts, feelings, and motions, and are often pained therewith" (*Teachings*, p. 326).

In order to understand more perfectly the principles here involved, let us commence a journey of learning together. We will follow a safe and well marked course. We will employ the Holy Ghost as our guide, revelation both personal and institutional as our compass, and angels as our companions. We will seek protection in the robes of the priesthood and the promises of the covenants we have made. Our story will begin and end in the sealing room of the temple.

### **Exquisite Joy**

I am a temple sealer and often have the privilege of performing temple marriages. Let me describe a recent experience. Two faithful families and special friends of the bride and groom filled the sealing room. The bride was beautiful as all brides are. She radiated joy. From the time she was a little girl she had wanted this to be the most special day of her life; and from the time her mother had first held her in her arms she too had dreamed of this moment. All present shared in her happiness.

Everything about the young man bespoke the kind of person you would want to marry your own daughter. Following some brief remarks to the couple about the importance of the covenant they were about to make I invited the groom to bring his bride to the alter where they knelt across from each other.

During the marriage ceremony both bride and groom wept with joy as did all present. The Spirit that filled the room was sweet and tender. Perhaps the word *sacred* would best describe the feeling in which we were all immersed.

### **A World Turned Upside Down**

All good things require their opposite. If we replay the events just recounted—in a world in which all things get turned upside down—our story becomes one in which pain replaces joy. Hurt and sorrow, which are also beyond the capacity of words to express, become the preeminent spirit.

Rather than centering on the radiant bride, our story now becomes one in which a child—loved and nurtured from the moment of their birth—announces that they struggle with same-sex attraction or that they are involved in one degree or another in homosexual activities. The glory of the sun seems now to have passed behind a cloud and the warmth of its rays replaced by a biting wind that cuts to the bone.

Emotion, like blinding snow, covers everything. Hopefully the constant in our story will be the love of family and friends. In that love there is safety and in that love the strength can be found to weather this and the other storms yet to come.

Yet, there can be no avoiding the fact that as in a torrential downpour everyone standing in it is going to get soaked and no amount of love can prevent it. Winter has come—gone are the blossoms, flowers, and fruits that we rejoiced in. For a time and season nothing will grow. Joy has quietly slipped away while pain boldly takes its place and with it will come lessons we would rather not have had to learn.

### **Alma, Pain and Suffering**

It is such a story that Alma the younger shared with his son Helaman. Alma tells how he, in company with the sons of Mosiah, went about seeking to destroy the Church and how their efforts were interrupted by “an holy angel” who spoke to them with the voice of thunder which caused the earth to tremble beneath their feet.

“We all fell to the earth,” Alma recalled, “for the fear of the Lord came upon us.” The angel commanded Alma to “Arise,” that is to stand at attention. The angel then said, “If thou wilt of thyself be destroyed, seek no more to destroy the church of God.”

Alma the younger then spent three days and three night “racked with eternal torment,” which he described as “the pains of hell.” His soul was racked “with inexpressible horror,” so awful was his torment that he prayed that he might cease to exist both “soul and body.” No such prayer can be answered and he continued to be “racked, even with the pains of a damned soul.”

“And it came to pass,” he said, “that as I was thus racked with torment, while I has harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world. Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.”

“And Now, behold, when I thought this,” Alma recounted, “I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain! . . . there could be nothing so exquisite and so bitter as were my pains. Yea, and again I say unto you, my son, that on the other hand, there can be nothing so exquisite and sweet as my joy.” (Alma 36:17-21)

### **Building the House of Our Understanding**

If we combine our temple story with the experience of Alma we can find the principles that enable us to move from a prison of darkness and indescribable pain to the realms of light and exquisite joy.

To properly build the house of our understanding we must first lay the cornerstones. They are as follows:

The first cornerstone is our belief in God the Eternal Father. We believe that the word *father* means *father* and that every soul upon this earth was created in the image and likeness of God—“male and female created he them.” Each of these souls is a “beloved son or daughter of heavenly parents, and as such, each has a divine nature and destiny.” (*The Family, A Proclamation to the World, 1:2.*)

We do not believe that God created his children to be merely servants or to stand in awe and wonderment at his greatness and glory throughout the endless expanses of eternity. Rather, we believe that salvation consists in our becoming like God. We believe that the fullness of that likeness is found only in the family unit. Salvation is a family affair.

The second cornerstone is our belief that Jesus the Christ is in very deed the Son of God. We believe that in and through his Atoning sacrifice all the spirit offspring of God who choose to comply with the laws and ordinances of the gospel may be saved—meaning exalted in the highest of the heavenly kingdoms. The purpose of Christ’s Atonement being to reconcile us with the Father, that is, to free us from the affects of Adam’s Fall and from the effects of our own transgressions that we might become fit citizens of a heavenly kingdom.

The third cornerstone is our belief in the Holy Ghost as the third personage in the Godhead. The roles of the Holy Ghost embrace that of Comforter, Sanctifier, Revelator, and Witness. As a Comforter he brings to the heart and soul of man the assurance of heaven that we are pursuing a course pleasing to God. As a Sanctifier the Holy Ghost purges our

soul of all that is unclean and impure that we might receive revelation and entertain angels. As a Revelator, he is the medium through which the mind and will of the Lord is granted to us. As a Witness he confirms all heaven sent truths in a manner that excels and exceeds any other.

The fourth cornerstone is our belief in the power and authority of the priesthood. We believe that the priesthood “administereth the gospel,” and that it is through the higher or holy priesthood that the blessings of the Atonement are ministered (D&C 84:19). Each ordinance of salvation being in and of itself a “key word,” meaning that in and through each ordinance knowledge and understanding that could not otherwise be had is unlocked or revealed to us.

Having laid these cornerstones we can now build the house of our understanding. In doing so, we will use the pattern and design of the Lord’s house. In all gospel dispensations the Lord has directed his people to build temples where he might “endow” them “with power” from on high.

Thus we seek to fashion our faith after that pattern. The word “endow” means “to clothe” or to “put on power.” The scriptural promises granted to those who have been endowed include being “taught from on high,” being “filled with light,” entertaining angels, and being blessed with the capacity to comprehend “all things.” (D&C 43:16; 84:88; 88:67)

The endowment must be preceded by the ordinance of baptism which brings with it the gift or companionship of the Holy Ghost. “No man,” the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, “can receive the Holy Ghost without receiving revelations” (*Teachings*, p. 328).

It is not of a single revelation of which we speak, but a continuing series of revelations. The pattern being “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little” (2 Nephi 28:30). And so it is that we proceed in confidence and faith knowing that as direction is needed it will be given.

### **The Ministry of Angels**

Let us now return to the matter of the ministering of angels. In doing so let it be remembered that we have but one gospel and its principles apply to all in the same manner.

If angels came in Bible or Book of Mormon times to aid parents in protecting, directing, and correcting their children they must come in like manner today. It is not required that they speak with thunder nor is it required that they cause the ground to quake. But that they come and that they get the attention of those to whom they come is as much a part of the gospel as baptism, the sacrament, and long meetings.

If the family unit is not eternal, if family councils are not held on the other side of the veil, if assignments are not made to look after their kin in the flesh, if their hearts are not pained by our actions as the Prophet said, and if angels have not “entertained” many “unawares,” then forget it; the gospel is just a security blanket for the simple minded.

On the other hand, if God lives then there are angels who administered to his Son, and if the laws of heaven are immutable, they can administer to my sons and my daughters and your sons and your daughters.

The Book of Mormon is based on this principle. Moroni, came from the realms of heaven to tell Joseph Smith about a record written by father’s to their children. This is the principle of which we speak.

The same principle holds for the Bible believing world. In the *Book of Malachi* (which should have been translated the *Book of Angels* because that is what the word *Malachi* means) we are told that Elijah the prophet is to come and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers and that if this does not happen there was no purpose in creating the earth in the first place. (Malachi 4:5-6)

Well, Elijah came and because he came the right rests with our righteous fathers on the other side of the veil to come and minister to wayward children today just as they did in Alma’s day.

If there is a God, a prophet named Elijah, and the word of the Bible is to be believed, then our pain is shared by our families on the other side of the veil and they have been granted power beyond that which we have to do something about it.

Having made covenants that bind us to generations past and future we are not going to be left to walk alone.

### **The Power of the Priesthood**

As to the matter of the priesthood, we have already observed that the Lord said that the higher or holy “priesthood administereth the gospel” (D&C 84:19). The full text reads as follows:

*And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.*

*Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.*

*And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;*

*For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. (D&C 84:19-22)*

The Lord’s house is a house of order. The gospel does not run rampant nor is it a smorgasbord from which we pick and choose that which we will embrace and that which we will not.

The priesthood is the authority by which the gospel is governed and all its blessings administered. It embraces the power to heal, and to sanctify. We must draw upon these blessings if we are to succeed. We, like Abraham of old, must seek after the blessings of heaven.

We must make fasting, prayer, priesthood blessings, the administration of angels, and all the blessing of the endowment real. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift” (D&C 88:33).

### Resolving Pain

Having built the house of our understanding, the house of our faith, we can take refuge therein. Thus it is to home and family that we turn to heal pain. We now do so with the understanding that any effort to escape the pain of which we speak, save it is done in accordance with the system instituted by the Lord himself, will fail.

We can join our errant child, we can immerse them in all the love to be found in this and all other universes and it will not be enough. Love is an integral part of the gospel but it is not the gospel. Love ceases to be what we suppose it to be when we divorce it from the companionship of other gospel principles and let it become something of a tyrant holding all other principles hostage.

When love is coupled with faith and obedience it becomes a life giving force. When it is used simply to excuse us from personal responsibility and from the need for obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, it like the Morning Glory in our gardens, reaches out and strangles everything that competes with it for space.

In so saying, we are completely aware there are those not of our faith who will greet such a statement with anger, telling us that such things as temples, ordinances, priesthood, and repentance were all done away with in the Atonement of Christ.

They would have us suppose that it is for everyone to read the Bible, accept Christ and then make a self-determination as to what constitutes salvation on their part. Picture it, a doctor handing his patient a list of all known drugs and saying, “Pick what you think will work and the dosage you think necessary.”

If the conditions for entrance into our heavenly Father’s kingdom are not of his making then the kingdom is not of his making either. If they do not represent principles that are eternal then in like manner the kingdom cannot be eternal.

### A Sure and Fixed Course

Pain and suffering are a part of the healing process. (Alma 42:16-18) In teaching this principle Elder Dallin H. Oaks asked, “Why is it necessary for us to suffer on the way to repentance for serious transgressions? We often think of the results of repentance as simply cleansing us from sin. But that is an incomplete view of the matter. A person who sins is like a tree that bends easily in the wind. On a windy and rainy day the tree bends so deeply against the ground that the leaves become soiled with mud, like sin. If we only focus on cleaning the leaves, the weakness in the tree that allowed it to bend and soil its leaves may remain. Merely cleaning the leaves does not strengthen the tree. Similarly, a

person who is merely sorry to be soiled by sin will sin again in the next high wind. The susceptibility to repetition continues until the tree has been strengthened.” (“Sin and Suffering” p.6)

Thus pain becomes the agent of sanctification; its purpose is to heal, and to make clean. It brings a strength that can be obtained in no other way.

The healing of emotional pain is greatly aided by liberal doses of love but it must be administered with considerable wisdom. Love like pain comes in different shades and colors. Clothed in purity it edifies and strengthens. Dressed in self-indulgence it—seeks to destroy all correct principles. In its darker form it seeks only to excuse, justify, and alienate those so afflicted from solemn covenants made with God.

The matter is rather simple to diagnose. Those who have received the wrong dosages of love will speak constantly of the Church’s need to change distaining the idea that any change in their behavior is warranted. In so doing they cut themselves off from all the blessings of the priesthood.

The significance of what is taking place here cannot be overstated. Write this on your hearts—*the priesthood is the power and authority by which the blessings of the Atonement are administered.* You cannot reject the direction of the priesthood without forfeiting the blessings of the Atonement.

To misunderstand this principle is to prescribing the wrong medicine. Long before the foundations of this earth were laid we were taught principles that are absolute and eternal and were prepared for the challenges we would meet in this life. If we did not bring that training with us there would have been no purpose in given it to us.

You have been taught that a veil of forgetfulness stands between you and that knowledge. There is always a veil between the secular and the sacred but you can part that veil. This is plainly taught in the temple.

The purpose of everything you are taught there is either to lift or part that veil. Our sure promise is that the power is in us, we are agents unto ourselves, we have been ordained to act rather than be acted upon and we have been prepared to meet the challenges that we will be called on to confront.

Our longitude and latitude—the earthly and the heaven—can be quickly obtained with a single question, “Does the course we are following lead to the Temple and the blessings granted there?”

The central promise granted there is that we obtain mastery by keeping covenants while breaking them can only lead to slavery. *No course of action can succeed in bringing the necessary healing save it leads to the temple.*

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