

GRATITUDE OPENS OUR HEARTS TO GOD'S LOVE

“...thank the Lord thy God in all things.” (D&C 59:7)

I am most grateful for God's love, as manifest through His marvelous creations and through the gift of His only Begotten Son, who brings perfection to the Father's perfect plan of happiness.

Dear Father. I am grateful that thou art ever there to hear my prayers. I see the manifestations of thy love in every direction. I thank thee for the grand harmony of thy creations through Thy Beloved Son. I thank thee for the Fall of Adam that brings to us this marvelous opportunity to fulfill our missions in mortality and to do as thy Beloved Son did – to do thy will. The Fall brings us opposition and many challenges, which give us opportunity to draw closer to Thee as we overcome them through Thy Son. As we follow His perfect example, we know that path leads us to the greatest of all gifts – Eternal Lives with Thee. Hope wells up in my bosom because of Thy love and as I contemplate Thy great plan of happiness. I am incredibly grateful that as I repent of all my sins and I invite Him into my life, I feel His love, His mercy, and His most marvelous forgiveness – that I may truly be free. I pray that those wonderful brothers and sisters, here today, may come to understand and internalize that gratitude opens the door to Thy love and to know Thee.

President Joseph F. Smith: I believe that one of the greatest sins of which the inhabitants of the earth are guilty today is the sin of ingratitude,... We see a man raised up with extraordinary gifts, or with great intelligence, and he is instrumental in developing some great principle. He and the world ascribe his great genius and wisdom to himself. He attributes his success to his own energies, labor and mental capacity... Cultivate Gratitude. The spirit of gratitude is always pleasant and satisfying because it carries with it a sense of helpfulness to others; it begets love and friendship, and engenders divine influence... The absence of this divine attribute is [most offensive] unto God. (See D&C 59:21)

Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined thee,... I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks In the midst of the persecutions the Latter-day Saints were suffering in Missouri, the Lord [said], “Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea, rejoice

evermore, and in everything give thanks;... and all things wherewith you have been afflicted shall work together for your good.” (D&C 98:1,3). And to Joseph Smith in the afflictions of Liberty Jail, the Lord said, “Know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.” (D&C 122:7). [“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes.” (D&C 121:8) We need be grateful for our trials.]

President John Taylor We have learned many things through suffering. We call it suffering. I call it a school of experience... I have never looked at these things in any other light than trials for the purpose of purifying the Saints of God that they may be, as the scriptures say, as gold that has been seven times purified by the fire.” (*Teachings of the Presidents of the church: John Taylor [2001], 203*)

President Gordon B. Hinckley: Gratitude is a divine principle. The Lord has declared through revelation: “Thou shalt thank the Lord thy God in all things. . . . And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things.” (D&C 59:7, 21.) Our society is afflicted by a spirit of thoughtless arrogance unbecoming those who have been so magnificently blessed. How grateful we should be for the bounties we enjoy. Absence of gratitude is the mark of the narrow, uneducated mind. It bespeaks a lack of knowledge... It expresses itself in ugly egotism and frequently in wanton mischief. We have seen our beaches, our parks, our forests littered with ugly refuse by those who evidently have no appreciation for their beauty. . . There is so much of ugliness in the world in which you live. It is found in the scarred earth, the polluted waters, the befouled air. It is expressed in coarse language, in sloppy dress and manners, in immoral behavior that mocks the beauty of virtue and always leaves a scar. But you can rise above this and revel in the beauty to be found with a little effort. I believe in beauty-the beauty of God's unspoiled creations, the beauty of his sons and daughters who walk without whimpering, meeting the challenges of each new day... Where there is appreciation, there is courtesy, there is concern for the rights and property of others. Without appreciation, there is arrogance and evil. Where there is gratitude, there is humility, as opposed to pride. Although I should not have been, I

was surprised at something President Kimball said on one occasion. I quote: "I find myself hungering and thirsting for just a word of appreciation or of honest evaluation from my superiors and my peers. I want no praise; I want no flattery; I am seeking only to know if what I gave was acceptable." (Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 489.) Gratitude is of the very essence of worship-thanksgiving to the God of Heaven, who has given us all that we have.... (Teaching of Gordon B. Hinckley, 1997)

Elder David B. Haight [In discussing the story of the ten lepers healed by the Savior (Luke 17:11-19) by telling them "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." He could have healed them then and there, but there are other great lessons to be learned by the world from this story. The one that returned was a Samaritan.] Elder Haight responds, "As I have read that story again and again, it's made a great impression upon me. How would you like to be part of the 'nine society.'?...to be numbered among those who failed to... acknowledge the Savior for the blessings He had given them?... I would remind all of you that if we're ever going to show gratitude properly to our Heavenly Father, we should do it with all of our heart, might, mind, and strength... He... gave us life and breath."(GC Oct.2002)

We attended (19 Oct.'01) a fireside at Susan and Ren Carter's, where we were privileged to meet Denise Mendenhall, her father, Doug, and a friend who wrote a book about Denise's and Doug's experiences, Rob Lake, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU. The fireside was one of the most meaningful experiences of my life in learning of the great importance of **GRATITUDE**. Denise was then 12, and when she was ten she went into an unexpected diabetic coma for three days. Her parents didn't even know that she was diabetic. With that she had a massive stroke with blood effusing into two-thirds of the left side of her brain. She was expected to die and if she lived, the expectations were that she would be at best like a vegetable. During those three days, her spirit was with the Savior on the other side of the veil and He showed her and taught her a great deal. She was shown His birth, His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ministration to the Americas, and much, much more. For example, she saw the City of Enoch.

When her spirit returned to her body, two remarkable things happened. She through prayers and priesthood blessings received a miraculous recovery, and the veil was not placed again over her mind. She can see spirit beings -- including the Savior -- as they come and go, and she can see everyone's aura and knows that different colors indicate different spiritual and/or

emotional characteristics. Her recovery is nearly totally complete with some slight limitations on the right side of her body. She knows with clarity that the spirit-world is right around us, and this was so different for her upon her return to her body that she sought to stay next to her daddy all of the time (night and day) because she was so taken back by seeing what was immediately around her. Specifically, it was interesting to learn from her that children and handicapped people have white auras and rarely does an adult have a white aura; they are usually yellow. Red is an indication of anger in the person -- often the color of mothers in a mall with their children. Purple is an indication of pride and she often sees this around doctors.

Now, her feelings about the atonement are very poignant. She saw the Savior in agony on the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane -- bleeding from every pore. She had a really hard time watching His pain. She saw the crown of thorns, the nails driven in the hands and in the wrists. He told her, "You must watch, Denise."

She responded, "I don't want to see you get hurt anymore. Why did you let them hurt you?"

"Father wanted it to be so. I hurt, Denise, that I might love perfectly. I hurt, Denise, because I love you and want you to be with Me."

As they raised the cross, she says that, "The mean crown with the big spikes fell off." She saw Mary cry out as she saw her son on the cross. He smiled love at her through His pain. She saw angels round about Him; then they left Him alone. He had to bear the sins of all of Father's children, ALONE! My heart cries out in the deepest of gratitude for this incomprehensible act of love for us.

She saw the spear thrust into His side; saw them place his body in a cave where His mother and some other women cleaned it and wrapped it. She saw His meeting with Mary Magdalene on that glorious resurrection morning. When He said, "Mary," she then knew it was He, and her heart went from the deepest despair to the heights of ecstasy.

Doug and his daughter, Denise have now the deepest feelings of gratitude for all the experiences of life. Doug learned that it is through gratitude that we approach the Savior.

The words whispered to me that gratitude was the beginning of a true friendship based on love. "In gratitude will you find my love; in gratitude will you find me." The voice was soft and comforting, more felt than heard. My heart sang out in joy. I understood! Gratitude is the door He stands at - the door He waits for us to open! Gratitude for all that is within our lives. (Doug Mendenhall in *My Peace*

