

**God's Love, Love of God**  
**Aloha 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward, January 20, 2001**  
**Mike Baird**

Our Stake theme for 2001 is:

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Cor 2:9)

Today as part of that theme, at the direction of our Stake President, I will talk about God's love for us, and our love for him.

In Moses we read:

“For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” (Moses 1:39)

It is God's desire to bless us with what he has and for us to dwell with him after this life.

For that reason a plan of salvation was presented, adopted and is now being carried out. We are here on this earth as part of that plan.

We are in the part described as:

“we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them;... and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:25-26)

**President Benson:**

*The great test of life* is obedience to God.

*The great task of life* is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it.

*The great commandment of life* is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (April 1988 General Conference, “The Great Commandment”)

How is it that we do or show that we “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength”?

**President Benson gives us an answer:**

To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is all-consuming and all-encompassing. It is no lukewarm endeavor. It is total commitment of our very being—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—to a love of the Lord.

The breadth, depth, and height of this love of God extend into every facet of one's life. Our desires, be they spiritual or temporal, should be rooted in a love of the Lord. Our thoughts and affections should be centered on the Lord. “Let all thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord,” said Alma, “yea, let the affections of thy heart be placed upon the Lord forever” (Alma 37:36). (April 1988 General Conference, “The Great Commandment”)

Wow, that is serious. Another way to say it might be:

- “We show love of our Heavenly Father by - our priorities in life and what we do.
- When we have the right priorities and we do, we then become.
- In fact we should be doing that we might become.
- And in turn we see evidence of God’s love for us in his blessings

I would like to discuss these things during the rest of my talk in the context of an imaginary discussion with my teenage son:

This discussion starts, like so many others with a question from my son....Dad, you just said we show our love of our Heavenly Father by priorities and by doing and then we become.

- What exactly do you mean by “our priorities show love of God”?
- How is it that we show love for Heavenly Father by doing?
- And what do you mean, *then we become*? Become what?

Those are fair questions, first let me talk about the priorities, then doing and then about becoming, and how this relates to loving God and his love for us.

## **First - We show love of our Heavenly Father by our *priorities* in life.**

We should put God first in our life ahead of anyone, or anything else.

We all know the story of Joseph when he was in Egypt.

What came first in his life—God, his job, or Potiphar’s wife? When she tried to seduce him, he responded by saying, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

Joseph was put in prison because he put God first. If we were faced with a similar choice, where would we place our first loyalty? Can we put God ahead of security, peace, passions, wealth, and the honors of men? (President Benson, April 1988 General Conference, “The Great Commandment”)

When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.

The Lord said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). One of the most difficult tests of all is when you have to choose between pleasing God or pleasing someone you love or respect—particularly a family member.

Nephi faced that test and handled it well when his good father temporarily murmured against the Lord (see 1 Ne. 16:18-25). Job maintained his integrity with the Lord even though his wife told him to curse God and die (see Job 2:9-10). (President Benson, April 1988 General Conference, “The Great Commandment”)

We can ask our self: When we are required to choose, where will our loyalty be?

Are we more anxious to please God than our boss, our teacher, our neighbor, or our date?

We too must be true to our God and put him first in our life.

## **Second - we show love of our Heavenly Father by *doing*.**

We can break “*doing*” down into two general areas.

- The first is keeping the commandments.

The Lord said “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

“For this is the love of God,” says John, “that we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 5:3; see also 2 Jn. 1:6).

- The second is to love one another
  - “And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40).
  - If we love our fellowmen—that is, our neighbors, brothers and sisters in the ward—we will treat them as we would like to be treated. There are many things involved in showing true love. Consider the words of the Lord to Moses:
    - “Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people. ...  
“Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. ...  
“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Lev. 19:16-18)
    - Christ said: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).
    - John, in his exhortations to the people, gave this strong denunciation:  
“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

Many of us have served missions in foreign countries. I served in Sweden. As part of that service I learned to love the Swedish people. I truly had great love and desires for them. This is I think one example of loving our neighbors.

We love them in spite of any differences we have.

## When we show love of our Heavenly Father by putting God first and loving our neighbors we *become*.

What *do* we become?

In its simplest sense – Like our Heavenly Father

Lets look at it another way

- Does God not want to give us all that he has?
  - He has said so.
  - I testify that he does.
- Listen to this parable given by Elder Dallin H Oaks. Think of this parable in the context of a loving Heavenly Father:

A wealthy father knew that if he were to bestow his wealth upon a child who had not yet developed the needed wisdom and stature, the inheritance would probably be wasted. The father said to his child: "All that I have I desire to give you--not only my wealth, but also my position and standing among men. That which I *have* I can easily give you, but that which I *am* you must obtain for yourself. You will qualify for your inheritance by learning what I have learned and by living as I have lived. I will give you the laws and principles by which I have acquired my wisdom and stature. Follow my example, mastering as I have mastered, and you will become as I am, and all that I have will be yours." (Oct 2000 Conference."The challenge to become")
- The application of the parable to us is clear.
- But Dad - Could He not give us all now though?
  - Yes he could, but then again no...
  - Because, just like in the parable given by Elder Oaks. That which He has can be given, but that which He is, we must become. As one studies the gospel, it becomes very clear that to obtain what God has, we must become like Him.
    - We must become purified and full of light to comprehend Him and become like Him.
    - He has said "ye cannot be saved in your sins" (Alma 11:37)
    - This is the difference between doing and becoming. We shall not be judged just upon what we have done, but also on what we have become. So "we do that we might become"
- Dad - if God loves me, why do I have to have trials to become like him?
  - Why not some easier way.
  - Why must it be so hard sometimes?
  - Why do I feel so lonely at times?
  - Why does tragedy have to happen to me?
- Lehi taught us that there must be opposition in all things.
  - Let me illustrate. Recently I fully retired from basketball and joined a health club for exercise.

- Why did I join the club? Why not go down to the muscle store and buy some muscles and drop off some fat while I'm there?
- Or if good health is obtained simply by joining a club, why can't I just go out and buy fancy exercise clothes, go to the club one hour each day, watch the TV, strut around a little and then go home with my new muscles?
- Well, because my muscles only grow with opposition. Since I joined I've work hard – and I have results. I can feel it. I am stronger. Just looking at me *you* may not be impressed but there is a difference from several months ago...
- It is the same with all aspects of us, spiritual and physical. We grow as we work and struggle with things.
- Remember when Joseph was languishing in Liberty Jail?
  - In Section 122 The Lord lists all sorts of calamities then says to Joseph: “**all** these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good”
- OK Dad, I can buy the opposition in all things but I have a couple of questions:
  - Why don't I always get the reward for a good thing I did now, when I want it, instead of later? You know how that's what is taught by experts today - the best method for teaching – instant reward? Seems like I would learn to keep the commandments better with this instant reward thing.
- Well, let me have President Benson answer that one, here is what he said, **President Benson**: One of the trials of life is that we do not usually receive immediately the full blessing for righteousness or the full cursing for wickedness. That it will come is certain, but oft times there is a waiting period that occurs, as was the case with Job and Joseph. In the meantime the wicked think they are getting away with something. The Book of Mormon teaches that the wicked “have joy in their works for a season, [but] by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return” (3 Ne. 27:11). During this testing time the righteous must continue to love God, trust in His promises, be patient, and be assured, as the poet said, that—

*Who does God's work will get God's pay,  
 However long may seem the day,  
 However weary be the way.  
 No mortal hand, God's hand can stay,  
 He may not pay as others pay,  
 In gold, or lands, or raiments gay,  
 In goods that perish and decay;  
 But God's high wisdom knows a way,  
 And this is sure, let come what may—  
 Who does God's work will get God's pay.  
 (Anonymous)*

**President Benson (goes on to say):**

I testify to you that God's pay is the best pay that this world or any other world knows anything about. And it comes in full abundance only to those who love the Lord and put Him first. (April 1988 General Conference, “The Great Commandment”)

- I add my testimony to his. God's pay is the best!

- We must keep in mind, in the midst of our struggles, joys and our sorrows, the good times and the bad that all this is for my good.

OK then Dad, my next question, can I not see His love in some other way than searching for it in trials, struggles and a promise of eternal life at some future time? Struggles can be cold comfort on the path to Eternal life

My answer to this question may seem to come in several parts, but you should realize it is all one and the same.

God said: ..for all flesh is in mine hands; **be still** and know that I am God (D&C 101:16)



In this modern world we live in it is so easy to be caught up, swept along in the hustle and bustle of work, school and other activities, to the point that even our play sometimes seems to have a frenetic, searching quality to it. We seem to be trying to validate our life with a rush to be here and there, searching for happiness, and comfort. We are told “you deserve it all now” or “indulge yourself” and thus we chase round and round, “searching in all the wrong places”

Such a scene painted before my mind recalls to me of this scripture:

And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice (1 Kings 19:11-12)

I testify that God is there, but we won't find him in the bright lights and popular worldly places and activities. Nor in indulging ourselves and running here and there, “searching in all the wrong places”. We will find him in the quiet time of prayer, scripture study and pondering. We will find him in the peace of the Temple. We will find him and his comfort when we search for him through service to others. We will find him as we keep his commandments. We will find him when we “be still” and listen to the still small voice.



## < Christ is as an extension of our Heavenly Father's love for us >

An oft quoted scripture with reference to God's Love is:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.. (John 3:16)

But dad – what does that mean in a practical sense?

- **Christ said:** “I am Jesus Christ; I came by the will of the Father, and I do his will.” (D&C 19:24)
- We can and should view Christ's life and actions as an extension of our Heavenly Father's love for us, for Christ did only that which was the will of the Father.

Christ has said:

“Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.” (D&C 19:23)

and he said further:

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee” (Psalms 55:22)

and again he gave us this invitation:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt 11:28)

and further still He took upon himself the burden of our sins

“For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent;” (D&C 19:16)

When I contemplate all the Savior has done for me, as an extension of God's love for me, the words of my favorite hymn come to mind:

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, thy power through out the universe displayed; Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, how great thou art!

When through the woods and forest glades I wander, and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees, when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze, then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, How great thou art!

And when I think of God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in, that on the cross my burden gladly bearing he bled and died to take away my sin, then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, How great thou art!

When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation, and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration and there proclaim, “My God, how great thou art!”

The words in the 3<sup>rd</sup> verse best express it for me. “I scarce can take it in”. It overwhelms my feelings, it resonates deep within me, I know that He loves me.



Above all else today my desire is that you may know that God loves us, cares about us, and desires to bless us.

Again, our Stake theme for the year is:

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Cor 2:9)

He has blessings in store that we know not. We will receive them if we will but show our love of him by doing his will.

Close - Testimony