Prophets' Promises to Parents of Wayward Children

Joseph Smith

When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother.[1]

Our Heavenly Father is more liberal in His views, and boundless in his mercies and blessings, than we are ready to believe or receive.[2]

Brigham Young

Let the father and mother, who are members of this Church and Kingdom, take a righteous course, and strive with all their might never to do a wrong, but to do good all their lives; if they have one child or one hundred children, if they conduct themselves towards them as they should, binding them to the Lord by their faith and prayers, I care not where those children go, they are bound up to their parents by an everlasting tie, and no power of earth or hell can separate them from their parents in eternity; they will return again to the fountain from whence they sprang.[3]

Wilford Woodruff

I tell you when the prophets and apostles go to preach to those who are shut up in prison . . . thousands of them will there embrace the gospel. They know more in that world than they do here.[4]

Lorenzo Snow

When the gospel is preached to the spirits in prison, the success attending that preaching will be far greater than that attending the preaching of our elders in this life. I believe there will be very few indeed of those spirits who will not gladly receive the gospel when it is carried to them. The circumstances there will be a thousand times more favorable.[5]

God has fulfilled His promises to us, and our prospects are grand and glorious. Yes, in the next life we will have our wives, and our sons and daughters. If we do not get them all at once, we will have them some time. . . . You that are mourning about your children straying away will have your sons and your daughters. If you succeed in passing through these trials and afflictions . . . you will, by the power of the Priesthood, work and labor, as the Son of God has, until you get all your sons and daughters in the path of exaltation and glory. This is just as sure as that the sun rose this morning over yonder mountains. Therefore, mourn not because all your sons and daughters do not follow in the path that you have marked out to them, or give heed to your counsels. Inasmuch as we succeed in securing eternal glory, and stand as saviors, and as kings and priests to our God, we will save our posterity.[6]

Joseph F. Smith

We will not finish our work until we have saved ourselves, and then not until we shall have saved all depending upon us; for we are to become saviors upon Mount Zion, as well as Christ. We are called to this mission.[7]

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[1] Alma P. Burton, ed., *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* 151.
[2] Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* 257.
[3] Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young*, 208.
[4] G. Homer Durham, ed., *The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff,* 152.
[5] Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow,* edited by Clyde J. Williams, p. 98
[6] Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow,* 195.
[7] Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Joseph F. Smith*, 442, emphasis added.

Orson F. Whitney

You parents of the wilful and the wayward! Don't give them up. Don't cast them off. They are not utterly lost. The Shepherd will find his sheep. They were his before they were yours—long before he entrusted them to your care; and you cannot begin to love them as he loves them. They have but strayed in ignorance from the Path of Right, and God is merciful to ignorance. Only the fulness of knowledge brings the fulness of accountability. Our Heavenly Father is far more merciful, infinitely more charitable, than even the best of his servants, and the Everlasting Gospel is mightier in power to save than our narrow finite minds can comprehend.[8]

The Prophet Joseph Smith declared—and he never taught more comforting doctrine—that the eternal sealings of faithful parents and the divine promises made to them for valiant service in the Cause of Truth, would save not only themselves, but likewise their posterity. Though some of the sheep may wander, the eye of the Shepherd is upon them, and sooner or later they will feel the tentacles of Divine Providence reaching out after them and drawing them back to the fold. Either in this life or the life to come, they will return. They will have to pay their debt to justice; they will suffer for their sins; and may tread a thorny path; but if it leads them at last, like the penitent Prodigal, to a loving and forgiving father's heart and home, the painful experience will not have been in vain. Pray for your careless and disobedient children; hold on to them with your faith. Hope on, trust on, till you see the salvation of God.[9]

James E. Faust

I believe and accept the comforting statement of Elder Orson F. Whitney. . . . A principle in this statement that is often overlooked is that they must fully repent and "suffer for their sins" and "pay their debt to justice." . . . "And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation." . . . Mercy will not rob justice, and the sealing power of faithful parents will only claim wayward children upon the condition of their repentance and Christ's Atonement. Repentant wayward children will enjoy salvation and all the blessings that go with it, but exaltation is much more. It must be fully earned. The question as to who will be exalted must be left to the Lord in His mercy.[10]

James E. Talmage

Alonzo A. Hinckley quoted Elder James E. Talmage: "I promise the Saints…of Zion that if their lives are such that they can look their sons and daughters in the face, and if any of them have gone astray, that the parents are able to say, 'It is contrary to my instruction and my life's example; it is against every effort of love, long suffering, faith, prayer and devotion that that boy or girl has gone,'—I promise you, fathers and mothers, that not one of them shall be lost unless they have sinned away the power to repent".[11]

Gordon B. Hinckley

I leave my blessing upon you. May there be . . . a sense of security and peace and love among your children, precious children every one of them, even those who may have strayed. I hope you don't lose patience with them; I hope you go on praying for them, *and I don't hesitate to promise that if you do, the Lord will touch their hearts and bring them back to you with love and respect and appreciation.*[12]

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[8] Orson F. Whitney, *Conference Report,* April 1929, 110.
[9] Orson F. Whitney, *Conference Report,* April 1929, 110.
[10] James E. Faust, "Dear Are the Sheep That Have Wandered", *Ensign,* May 2003, 62.
[11] *Conference Report*, October 1919, 161.
[12] Gordon B. Hinckley, *Church News*, 2 September 1995, 4. Used by permission.