

Your Inheritance: Secure or in Jeopardy?

ARDETH G. KAPP

How Do We Respond?

Tonight I would like to talk with you about your rightful inheritance—that which you are heir to, your birthright. Some months ago I visited a sacrament meeting in another ward. It was a missionary farewell for a friend of mine. After a few words of greeting and the opening song and prayer, the bishop attended to some ward business. Then, looking out across the audience as though there was only one of his flock he cared for at that moment, he asked, “Chad, are you here?”

Immediately the sound of a folding chair knocking noisily against another could be heard. A young boy a few rows ahead of me made his way awkwardly into the aisle. As he turned to maneuver past the chairs, I observed that his facial features showed some abnormality. It appeared that he may not have the same mental abilities as other young people his age. He was facing life with obvious handicaps, or so it seemed.

I watched with others as this young man, with great enthusiasm, literally ran in his awkward way, making his short legs move as fast as possible from the back where he was sitting, up the full length of the chapel.

As the bishop put his protective arm around Chad and drew him close for only a moment, the two looked at each other as though it were a private exchange only they understood. With Chad nestled securely in the fold of his arm, the bishop announced with pride to the audience, “Chad has earned his Duty to God Award. He has qualified in every way.” Then, glancing down at the young man, he said with deep feeling, “We’re all proud of you, Chad.”

Following the presentation there was the usual handshake and an additional warm and sustained embrace. As Chad turned to leave, he broke with tradition and raised his hand high in the air. The bishop understood the signal and responded to Chad’s invitation by raising his hand to meet Chad’s, giving a resounding clap in the air. Outside the meeting he would likely have added the words, “Give ‘em five.”

Ardeth G. Kapp was president of the Young Women of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 1 February 1987.

Chad then turned from the bishop, but before leaving the stand moved enthusiastically toward the chorister, who stood and wrapped him in his arms. I learned later that the man was his father.

The young boy then left the podium, making his way down the aisle wearing a broad smile with his arm raised high in the air as if to “give ‘em five” to every ward member who had helped him along and now shared in his victory.

It has been months since that memorable Sunday, but in my mind I keep replaying that scene over and over again. What struggles and challenges preceded that day for Chad? Were there times when he might have wanted to give up? Certainly some of the requirements must have been harder for him than they were for others his age. Were there times of discouragement and maybe disappointment? He was smiling when the bishop called him forward to receive his Duty to God Award, but there must have been many times when even duty to God was difficult. I wonder if there were times when Chad, in the privacy of his own heart, asked the Father why—why does it have to be so hard; it doesn’t seem fair. And while he waited for the answer, he kept going.

Each of us has some circumstances that might seem like handicaps, not necessarily like Chad’s, but challenges that test our courage and strength, our commitment, and ultimately our faith in a loving Heavenly Father. And how do we respond? It goes on every day.

A bishop calls. The call is heard, and thousands of you are responding. You who have learned to listen for the call are prepared and ready to respond—you don’t wait, you don’t walk, you don’t stop to explain, you don’t ask why. However wearisome the test or whatever the circumstances, however severe the handicaps or steep the road, still you prepare to come running when called.

As we learn to listen and follow the counsel of the Lord, both written and spoken, we prepare for that day when there will be a call for

each of us—a call to come home—not later when we are better prepared, but now. We might hear the words, “Come, my son, my daughter. Come as you are, but come now.”

With unwavering faith in our ultimate reward and our divine inheritance as rightful heirs, will we, like Chad, be prepared to run forward with confidence when we hear that call?

Alma in the Book of Mormon invites us to envision the alternative:

Can you imagine to yourselves that ye hear the voice of the Lord, saying unto you, in that day: Come unto me ye blessed, for behold, your works have been the works of righteousness upon the face of the earth? . . .

Or otherwise, can ye imagine yourselves brought before the tribunal of God with your souls filled with guilt and remorse, having a remembrance of all your guilt, yea, a perfect remembrance of all your wickedness, yea, a remembrance that ye have set at defiance the commandments of God?

I say unto you, can ye look up to God at that day with a pure heart and clean hands? I say unto you can you look up, having the image of God engraven upon your countenances? [Alma 5:16, 18–19]

The answer to that question is found in the choices we make each and every day. Every choice counts one way or the other. We are free to choose to follow or not to follow, to abide by the law or to disregard it, to have freedom or to forfeit our freedom, to claim our inheritance or to leave it unclaimed.

Exercising Our Agency

Several weeks ago, during the time I was giving thought to this message, I was asked to participate in an institute program and speak to a gathering of men in a small chapel. These men had an understanding of law, agency, freedom, blessings, choice, and accountability. To reach the chapel I had to

go through tight security, present identification, and be escorted by an officer of the law down a long corridor through sets of metal doors with bars that sounded a haunting echo as the metal clanged against metal. As each door in sequence closed tightly behind me, I knew I was locked in. There was no doubt in my mind about that. As I, with a friend, proceeded down the long corridor, there were odors revealing habits of enslavement. As we approached the chapel we heard a sound that seemed foreign to that setting—beautiful male voices harmonizing with feeling. Entering the meeting that was already in session, I observed each man wearing the same uniform. It wasn't a dark suit and white shirt, although I learned that more than one of them had worn a missionary suit. Their uniforms each had an identification number across their hearts.

Looking at their numbers I wondered, "Who are they really?" Almost everyone was holding one of the new green hymnbooks. Would you be interested in knowing what song these men who had made choices that robbed them of their freedom and put them behind bars were singing? I wish you could hear that song sung by these men—"How Gentle God's Commands." I'll never hear that song again without reliving that experience. Listen with me to the words:

*How gentle God's commands!
How kind his precepts are!
Come, cast your burdens on the Lord
And trust his constant care.*

*Beneath his watchful eye,
His Saints securely dwell;
That hand which bears all nature up
Shall guard his children well.*

*Why should this anxious load
Press down your weary mind?
Haste to your Heav'nly Father's throne
And sweet refreshment find.*

*His goodness stands approved,
Unchanged from day to day;
I'll drop my burden at his feet
And bear a song away.*

[“How Gentle God's Commands,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 125]

Shaking hands with one of the inmates, I introduced myself. “I’m Sister Kapp,” I said. “I’m Brother So-and-So,” he said. As I looked into his sad eyes, the feeling came over me: My brother, when did you begin to exercise your agency, your freedom, and begin little by little to move from freedom to enslavement and finally imprisonment? Did you not know that you were an heir with a birthright, a divine inheritance? Did you realize you were moving in this direction? Did it begin in high school when the influence of peers spoke louder than the wisdom of parents? Or was it the freedom from parents in the environment of college that opened a door that appeared to lead to freedom and that has now closed and locked behind you? When did the chains that bind begin to form just one small link at a time? Who else shares in the responsibility? Is it perhaps that I am not only my brother’s keeper but also my brother’s maker? What is the impact of my influence on those around me?

As children of God we are his heirs, but first we must be tested before we can be trusted with our inheritance—the power and blessings of God our Eternal Father. We can become joint heirs with Jesus Christ with glory added upon our heads forever and ever. Think of it.

Being Tried and Tempered

When we come to fully understand our promised blessings, our inheritance, and the mission of the Savior and the price he paid in our behalf to help us claim it, I believe, with that spiritual perspective, that even on our hardest days our tests will hardly seem severe

enough. It seems unfathomable that after the price paid by our Savior because of his great love for us, we are still free to choose whether or not that sacrifice in our behalf is accepted or rejected. We are given our agency. “Why?” we ask.

President Lorenzo Snow taught that

The Lord has determined in His heart that He will try us until He knows what He can do with us. He tried His Son Jesus. Thousands of years before He came upon the earth the Father had watched His course and knew He could depend upon Him when the salvation of worlds should be at stake; and He was not disappointed. So in regard to ourselves, He will try us, and continue to try us, in order that He may place us in the highest positions in life and put upon us the most sacred responsibilities. [The Millennial Star, August 24, 1899, p. 532]

As we are tried and tempered in the furnace of affliction, it is not to consume us but to refine us, to qualify us, to prove us. Our severe tests are designed to try us “even as Abraham” (D&C 101:4). And if you’re not experiencing any tests, I would recommend that you pray for a few, though I suspect that you have enough. It’s possible that some of you may even have some to spare or at least swap if you could.

The temptations and testing begin very early in life and continue so long as we dwell in this mortal state. It begins something like this:

My little nephew, Kent, was pleading with his mom just before dinnertime to go over to his friend’s to play. His mother denied his request. “No,” was the answer, “not now.” He went outside in his sandpile to ponder. Something in the inherent nature of everyone reaches out for freedom and a desire to exercise agency. Kent’s mom looked out the kitchen window and observed this little boy not playing but in thoughtful meditation. All of a sudden he came running to the house. Coming

into the kitchen he posed a question: “Mom, what if I go to Dougie’s anyway?”

She said, “Then I guess I would have to discipline you for disobeying.”

He said, “What would you do?”

Being pressed for an answer without having much time to ponder the magnitude of the disobedience, she said, “I guess I’d have to spank you.”

He thought momentarily and then inquired further concerning the consequence before making his decision: “Would it be with my pants up or on my bare bottom?”

His mom was not quite prepared for this interrogation but responded, “I guess it would be with your pants up.”

And then he pressed further, “How many times?”

“Five,” she said.

“Five!” he exclaimed. “Five for just going to Dougie’s? That’s not fair.”

“It might not seem fair,” she explained, “but that’s how it is. You suit yourself.”

He needed more information before he made a decision. “Can I go after lunch?” he asked.

“Kent, if you choose to be obedient and not go over to Dougie’s, then after lunch we’ll do something even better. You can go with me to pick up your daddy.”

Kent had not known of that alternative. With that in the plan the desire to go to his friend’s house was of little consequence. He used his agency, was spared the spanking, and participated in an even more desirable activity.

Laws and Commandments

Sometimes we are shortsighted and are not aware of what awaits us just around the corner following our obedience. We do not “receive a witness until after the trial of [our] faith” (Ether 12:6). We don’t negotiate with our Father in Heaven on these matters. The laws are in place. We know that “there is a law. . . upon which all blessings are predicated,” and we

know that when we receive any blessing “it is by obedience to that law” (D&C 130:20).

And so our Father, wanting us to qualify for all of the blessings, has given us laws and commandments. These commandments are given not to restrict us but to redeem us—not to just reform us but to exalt us. Therefore, as Nephi said, “Cheer up your hearts, and remember that ye are free to act for yourselves—to choose the way of everlasting death or the way of eternal life” (2 Nephi 10:23).

Some of us will resent, resist, even recoil from the apparent restrictions imposed upon us. And so it was in the Savior’s time. There were those who didn’t like what he taught. “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?” they said. “When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?” (John 6:60–61). And we read that “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:66).

There are, at least in the minds of some, too many rules, too many commandments, honor codes, housing rules, all kinds of regulations, standards, and restrictions. In the springtime of the year there are even signs that say, “Keep off the grass.” These serve as constant reminders. And leaders who love us and believe in us will give of their time to meet with us at regular intervals and help remind us of what we have the capacity to become. Especially in times of discouragement, trials, and tests, leaders will help us, carry our burdens, and believe in us when we may otherwise not even believe in ourselves. Obedience is the key that unlocks the door and sets us free.

I am reminded of a short, stocky Bolivian woman who roamed the altiplano driving her llama herds day after day with little direction or purpose. It didn’t matter too much the direction in which they wandered until one day she was drawn into the gospel net and her spirit responded to truth.

When she was learning of the mission of the Savior, the meaning of the Atonement and his ultimate sacrifice, and the purpose of her earth life, with her dark eyes now opened wide, she whispered, “You mean he did that for me?” And then, more as a testimony than a question, contemplating the reality of the Atonement, she repeated, “You mean he did that for me?” And he did, brothers and sisters, for you and for me. But if we are to claim our inheritance, we must individually find him.

Consider how Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, must have felt when he found his brother and told him, “We have found . . . the Christ” (John 1:41), and Philip, too, who told Nathanael, “We have found him. . . . Come and see” (John 1:45–46).

Have you found him? Because of the Atonement and by obedience to gospel law, we can find him and become joint heirs with him in the fullness of our Father’s kingdom. With this knowledge, what could possibly threaten or put in jeopardy our inheritance? Agency plays a major part. It is with our agency that we cast our vote; and make no mistake, there are influences of an unseen enemy that seek relentlessly to entice us to what appear to be attractive alternatives and will lobby for our vote. Throughout the scriptures we read, “Satan did stir up [their] hearts” (Helaman 6:21)—that same being who put it into the hearts of the people to “carry on the work of darkness” (Helaman 6:29). “It is he who is the author of all sin. . . from generation to generation according as he can get hold upon the hearts of the children of men” (Helaman 6:30), “And thus we see that the Spirit of the Lord began to withdraw” (Helaman 6:35). We read “that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves; for if they never should have bitter they could not know the sweet” (D&C 29:39).

Nephi, in concern for his people, asked, “How could you have given way to the

enticing of him who is seeking to hurl away your souls down to everlasting misery and endless woe? . . . Why will ye die?” (Helaman 7:16–17).

On occasion I hear someone try to excuse themselves of the responsibility of wrong decisions saying, “But the devil made me do it.” Such a thought is foolishness. The teachings of President Brigham Young help us better understand our responsibility. He taught that

God is the author of all good; and yet, if you rightly understood yourselves, you would not directly attribute every good act you perform to our Father in heaven, nor to his Son Jesus Christ, nor to the Holy Ghost; neither would you attribute every evil act of a man or a woman to the Devil or his spirits or influences; for man is organized by his Creator to act perfectly independently of all influences there are above or beneath. Those influences are always attending him, and are ready to dictate and direct—to lead him into truth or to lead him to destruction. But is he always guided by those influences in every act? He is not. It is ordained of God that we should act independently in and of ourselves, and the good is present when we need it. If we will ask for it, it is with us. [JD 9:122]

Battling with the Adversary

Our time is the time spoken of by the prophets when the adversary is aggressively marshalling his forces as never before in the last great battle against righteousness. And he is using the same tactics he employed in his attempts to distract the Savior from his appointed mission. The first was a temptation of the appetite, an inherent craving to satisfy hunger and the demands of the flesh. An uncontrolled appetite attacks one’s reasoning. It begins with rationalization, then justification, and finally the actual use of artificial stimulants such as drugs and alcohol and the addicting influence of pornography. When out of hand the result is personal devastation—not freedom, but enslavement. The question, then:

“Do I have an appetite for anything that could be enslaving?”

The second temptation is to have us yield to pride, fashion, vanity, the praises of men, peer influence, and those things that separate us from the things of God. Our hearts become centered on the things of the world rather than on things of the spirit. Popularity, prestige, power, and positions become more important than humility, meekness, and teachability. Does your passion for popularity affect how you dress, where you go, what you do and do not do, publicly and privately, in your apartments and at your parties, on and off campus? Is your inheritance ever in jeopardy?

As a trustee of this remarkable institution, and one who cares deeply about you young people, I not only wonder but worry about these things. I want you to know that you are on my mind and in my prayers.

The third temptation is to gratify the hungering for the riches of the world. Some of you will remember the statement of Jeb Stuart McGruder, sentenced to a federal prison for his part in Watergate. He told Judge Sirica, “My ambition obscured my judgment. . . . I know what I have done and your honor knows what I have done.” He said that somewhere between his ambition and ideals, he lost his ethical compass (see “McGruder Gets Jail on Watergate,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, Wednesday, May 22, 1974, p. A1).

Is your ethical compass useful and visible and dependable? Can you say with Job, “till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me”? (Job 27:5). It is true that some people seem to have more temptations than others, and some have greater power of resistance than others. “But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Getting the Gospel on the Inside

There could be no condemnation for our doing what we can't help, but we can help doing the things that violate the laws and commandments. God has given us power to resist these things, and we can call upon him for the strength we lack. And by our habits we gain control. It works like this.

I am your constant companion. I am your greatest helper or heaviest burden. I will push you onward or drag you down to failure. I am completely at your command. Half the things you do, you might just as well turn over to me and I will be able to do them quickly and correctly.

I am easily managed. You must merely be firm with me. Show me exactly how you want something done and after a few minutes I will do it automatically. I am the servant of all great men, and alas, of failures as well. Those who are great, I have made great. Those who are failures, I have made failures.

I am not a machine, though I work with all the precision of a machine plus the intelligence of man. You may run me for profit or run me for ruin—it makes no difference to me.

Take me, train me, be firm with me, and I will place the world at your feet. Be easy with me, and I will destroy you. Who am I? I am habit!
[Anonymous]

It is our habits in relation to the gospel of Jesus Christ that bind us or free us. It is our habits that determine whether our inheritance is to be claimed or unclaimed. We are what we are because of our habits. The habit of striving to keep all of the commandments will change us from what we are to what we are to become. It is a process that changes our souls, our appetites, our desires. When we get the gospel on the inside and make it part of our very being, we have not just changed our habits; our habits have literally changed us—a mighty change.

We can have the gift of the Holy Ghost with us always, and that gift is more than a

prompting to do right and wrong. As Elder Parley P. Pratt wrote,

It quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections. . . . It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness, and charity. It develops beauty of person, form and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It . . . invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, . . . and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being

. . . Such is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and such are its operations when received through the lawful channel, the divine, eternal Priesthood. [Key to the Science of Theology (Salt Lake City: George Q. Cannon and Sons, 1891), p. 101]

One evening last year, just before Christmas, my husband, Heber, and I made our way through the deep snow of an unshoveled walk and rang the door-bell. We were immediately greeted by Brent, an eight-year-old boy. He invited us in. We exchanged greetings with others while Brent stood by, anxiously waiting for the first opportunity to pose a question. In a most forthright and direct way, he simply asked, "Have you ever shaken hands with the prophet?"

His eagerness gave me reason to believe that he may have rehearsed that question in his mind several times in anticipation of our visit. "Yes, Brent," I said, "I have shaken the hand of the prophet."

"Oh," he said, "if I could just shake the hand of the prophet."

Sensing the love and respect Brent obviously felt for our prophet-leader, and wanting to somehow provide a tie between the prophet and the young boy, I reached out my hand. "Brent," I said, "this hand has shaken the hand of the prophet." To that offer he grabbed my hand and shook it vigorously. Then, letting go,

he turned his right hand over from front to back to examine it thoroughly. “I’ll never wash my hand,” he said.

I suggested that he probably should wash his hand and just keep the memory in his mind. This suggestion was not acceptable to Brent. He had a better idea. “Okay,” he said, “I’ll wash my hand, but I’ll save the water.” That seemed like a good suggestion, although I supposed he was only joking.

A few minutes later, he came into the room carrying a plastic bag dripping with water. Before anyone could question him, he proudly announced, “I washed my hand,” holding the bag full of water for all to see. Brent sat on the floor facing the Christmas tree, his knees poking through his faded blue jeans. From the corner of my eye I watched him examine the bag full of water as if he were expecting to see some evidence that it was holy water.

As we continued visiting, Brent got up and, taking his treasure with him, left the room. He returned again, this time without the plastic bag full of water. He had determined a better solution. Brent stood there in the doorway with his faded gray T-shirt wet all the way down the front. Without hesitation he gave a complete explanation. “I drank the water,” he said.

Brent’s creative solution was not to be viewed as a joke or something to make fun of. He was serious. He was carrying something important—not on the outside where he could lay it down, but on the inside. The water from the hand that he had washed that had shaken the hand of someone who had shaken the hand of the prophet was now part of him, on the inside, and he wanted to keep it there. He seemed very pleased with his solution.

Would it really make any difference? I wondered. What did it really mean to Brent? It was much more than water I was sure. It was in sacrament meeting the Sunday before Christmas that I received a deeper understanding of what I felt this young boy, just recently baptized, was

feeling and wanting. The sacramental prayer had been offered, and the sacred ordinances were being passed quietly and reverently. It was a time of recommitment and rededication, sorrow for wrongdoings, and resolve and hope with the beginning of a new year to do better.

The sister on my right passed the sacrament tray and held it while I raised the small cup of water to my lips. Into my mind came the thought, “I want to get this water on the inside.” I remembered the baptismal covenant; I thought of the symbolism of the water and the covenants made.

I remembered what President Marion G. Romney had said:

Now there is a doctrine abroad in the world today which teaches that the physical emblems of the sacrament are transformed into the flesh and blood of Jesus. We do not teach such a doctrine, for we know that any transformation which comes from the administration of the sacrament takes place in the souls of those who understandingly partake of it. It is the participating individuals who are affected, and they are affected in a most marvelous way, for they are given the Spirit of the Lord to be with them. [CR, April 5, 1946, p. 40]

When we find ourselves out of control for a time, out of harmony, and disappointed in our actions in relation to our desires, we need not despair. There is a place of spiritual repair. We can take our wounded spirit faithfully and regularly to the sacrament altar and there renew our covenants, our commitments, by offering a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Then we begin, in part at least, to feel the healing, the peace, the deep, abiding love when we ponder the meaning of the Atonement in our personal lives. There we will feel what Andrew and Nathanael must have felt and say with them, “We have found Christ. We have found him. Come and see.”

Holding on to the Lifeline

Come with me if you will, in your mind's eye, to an experience I had while participating in a survival camp with a group of youth in the High Sierras a couple of years ago. After three days of physically challenging and spiritually strengthening experiences, we faced one of the last activities—that of rappelling down an eighty-foot cliff, which from the top looking down appeared to be more like an enormously high mountain. Some of the youth had gone before and some would follow, but now it was my turn.

I surveyed the setting. Overhead the sky was blue and clear. Looking over the edge of the cliff, it was a long, long way down. The edge of the cliff jutted out so I could not see the landing place at the bottom or the people who would welcome me or pick up the pieces down below. I quickly looked to the sky again to catch my breath. The instructor securely wrapped a strap around my legs and waist, placed the rappelling rope in my hand, and proceeded with instructions. It's fascinating how much better you can listen and concentrate when you know it really matters. He had explained the skill of rappelling and the importance of the safety rope with individual instruction as each took their turn; but when it was my turn, I listened more intently. I wanted to know all that he knew. I didn't want any of the rules of rappelling overlooked or minimized. He told me that the safety rope would secure me, but if I was to get to my destination safely, I had a few things I must do. If I followed the instructions I'd get there safely; if not, I would suffer varying degrees of discomfort according to my ability to follow the instructions. I learned right away that his instructions were accurate as I experienced some discomforting rope burn on my hands.

Without looking down, but always looking up and straining to listen for instructions, advice, and encouragement, I began to ponder at that halfway position, forty feet from the top

and forty feet from the bottom, about this experience.

Holding onto the rope, I was reminded of the teachings of President George Q. Cannon.

When we went forth into the waters of baptism and covenanted with our Father in heaven to serve Him and keep His commandments, He bound Himself also by covenant to us that He would never desert us, never leave us to ourselves, never forget us, that in the midst of trials and hardships, when everything was arrayed against us, He would be near unto us and would sustain us. That was His covenant. [Gospel Truth; Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon, sel. Jerrald L. Newquist, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Zion's Book Store, 1957), August 6, 1893, p. 170]

The Savior, I thought, bound himself to us. He is our safety rope. He throws out the lifeline—literally, our lifeline. Through obedience to the laws and the commandments, we tie ourselves securely to him. The rope I held was the safety rope. I had my agency. I could hang on or I could let go. Or if I wanted, I could take my pocketknife, exercise my agency, and cut just one fine strand at a time. Surely one strand at a time would be no risk. I likened the rope to the commandments. I can break one commandment at a time. Surely one commandment at a time won't hurt. Would you ever consider letting go of a rope and challenging your ability to survive against the law of gravity? Would you ignore the commandments of God and pit your resistance against the power of the adversary?

If we choose to hold onto the rope, we are limited, restricted, curtailed, but through that very process our Father in Heaven has said he will make us free. Only after we are tried and tested can we be trusted with our inheritance as heirs to the kingdom of God, joint heirs of Jesus Christ. If you choose to let go of the rope and release yourself from the laws and commandments, you also choose the consequences,

because even God obeys the law. Through disobedience to laws we will fall.

Those men, your brothers and mine, in the prison chose to let go of the rope. They cut themselves free of the laws, they rejected the “hard sayings,” and now, within their prison walls, they sing, “How Gentle God’s Commands.”

Let us protect ourselves from enslavement and release ourselves from those prison walls of our own making that weaken our grasp on the safety rope—the lifeline, the iron rod. The Savior taught that should one choose to willfully leave his father and waste his inheritance in sin, his repentant return should be treated with rejoicing and acceptance. Thus he illustrated the worth of souls to the Father and the love his disciples should have for each other. Through the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, Jesus taught that every soul is of great worth in the kingdom of God.

When we want what he wants, we will have all that we desire and a thousand times more. It was Mary, the mother of the Savior, who exemplified in the most glorious way her preparation and submission to the will of God when she responded to the angel Gabriel, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38).

The Lord said, “Come . . . follow me” (Matthew 19:21). I know from my own experience that on those occasions when we follow with full purpose of heart, acting with integrity—no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with all intent, repenting of our sins (see 2 Nephi 31:13)—we can feel that quiet assurance that we are free, free from the chains that bind; free from darkness, unbelief; free from depression, anger, hatred; free from jealousies, envy, cravings of the appetite, hungering for the riches of the world; free from fear; and free to claim our inheritance.

The way is simple.

*“Come, follow me,” the Savior said.
Then let us in his footsteps tread,
For thus alone can we be one
With God’s own loved, begotten Son.
Not only shall we emulate
His course while in this earthly state,
But when we’re freed from present cares,
If with our Lord we would be heirs.
For thrones, dominions, kingdoms, pow’rs,
And glory great and bliss are ours,
If we, throughout eternity,
Obey his words, “Come, follow me.”
[“Come, Follow Me,” Hymns, 1985, no. 116]*

As we consider that day when the bishop called, “Chad, are you here?” and he came running, we can anticipate a similar day for each of us. As Latter-day Saints, let us keep ever in our minds an anticipation of that glorious day. President George Q. Cannon helps us envision that event with these words:

*We are the children of God, and as His children there is no attribute we ascribe to Him that we do not possess, though they may be dormant or in embryo. . . .
. . . we existed with Him in the family relationship as His children.
. . . when we see our Father in heaven [again] we shall know Him; and the recollection that we were once with Him and that He was our Father will come back to us, and we will fall upon His neck, and He will fall upon us, and we will kiss each other. We will know our Mother, also. [Gospel Truth, vol. 1, pp. 1, 3]*

I can believe that with outstretched arms our Father will say, “My son, my daughter, I have you again.” And we will respond, “Oh, my father, my mother, I am home again.” Then we will, when prepared, receive our inheritance and become the sons and daughters of God—heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ—to this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.