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Unleashing the Dormant Spirit

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Unleashing the Dormant Spirit

F. ENZIO BUSCHE

I am overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude and love as I stand before you, my dear brothers and sisters. We have the opportunity to spend a few minutes together where we can turn our minds and our souls away from our daily routines to ponder and to contemplate the things that matter most.

I want to draw our attention today to a very special scripture that has been on my mind for quite some time and that, the more I contemplate and ponder on it, seems to open more dimensions of understanding and of enlightenment. It is taken from section 45 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In this section the Lord reveals to the Prophet Joseph the very circumstances of the world at the time of his Second Coming. In the middle of this eye-opening descriptive picture, the Lord is answering the question that Christendom has had about the meaning of the parable of the ten virgins.

And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say

unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day. [D&C 45:56–57]

As we stop and think, we suddenly see that in these words the Lord is revealing some key truth that, when not taken into consideration, affects the very essence of our eternal existence. In my understanding, we cannot afford to overlook the fact that the Lord is literally telling us that nothing really matters unless we take the Holy Spirit as our guide and avoid being deceived. Let us seriously ask ourselves, therefore: Do we really understand the importance of this message?

In order to deal with this issue appropriately, I want to look first at the second part—the need to avoid being deceived.

I have seen tragedies happen when members professed that they had prayed about a certain direction and then, assuming that they

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had received answers, ran right into disaster. There seems to be, inside of us, the capability to be spiritually illiterate, in spite of the brilliant knowledge that we may have about the facts of the Restoration, the plan of salvation, and the organizational part of the restored gospel. We must never forget that our enemy, the adversary, is also a spiritual being. He knows of spiritual powers, and, therefore, he is out to deceive, when he can—even, sometimes, the very elect. Occasionally we may even feel a certain reluctance to deal with matters of a spiritual nature because of our insecurity in discerning the difference between the influence from the Spirit of God and the promptings that may come from the liar and deceiver. Every faithful Latter-day Saint will see the influence of the adversary in blunt and blatant appearances, but it seems easy to become confused when the influence of the adversary comes as a subtle deception, as he is the master of disguise.

A good help to avoid this dilemma was, for me always, to put myself through a test—a test that was actually defined by the Lord, as we read the words of the Lord, according to Luke 14:33: “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Christ is literally cutting a knife into our soul, making it clear to us that there is no middle way and that we have always to ask ourselves where, exactly, we stand. When we can, in an honest reflection, say: “Yes, I am a disciple of Christ, I’m willing to sacrifice my own will, my habits, attitudes, and selfish desires, and endure the hurt and the pain that such reflections cause, and bring to him as a sacrifice a broken heart and a meek spirit,” he will baptize us “with fire and with the Holy Ghost,” and we will not be deceived (see 3 Nephi 9:20).

After we have settled the issue of not being deceived, I want to come back to the question “Do we really understand the importance of Christ’s statement that absolutely nothing matters unless we take the Holy Spirit as our

guide?” It is obvious that we have, with our baptism, received the gift of the Holy Ghost, but there seems to be the need to learn more about the workings of the Spirit so that our life can be blessed with its fruits, not only for our own benefit, but that through the fruit of the lives of the Saints, the honest people in this world may see the light that can enable them to find their way to salvation. As the Lord has told us, the fruit of the Spirit is the only way to recognize his disciples:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

[Matthew 7:16–20]

I remember the day I began my service as a mission president. On that morning I had the zone leaders coming to the mission home. In my enthusiasm and excitement, understanding the importance of the Spirit in our work, I asked the missionaries, “How much of a typical day in the service are you normally under the vibrating, powerful influence of the Spirit?” I remember their reaction. They obviously did not know what to say. They acted like I caught them by surprise. Having been converted as an adult and, therefore, not having served as a young, full-time missionary myself, I assumed that it was natural that a missionary would be always under the influence of the Spirit. How surprised I was when, after a time with no missionary daring to say anything, one of them finally said, “Last Thursday night, while we were teaching the Lehman family, we were feeling the Spirit.”

I remember my immediate response was, “That was it? How about the rest of the day?”

I immediately understood that we cannot have a successful mission experience until we learn how to behave or learn what to do so that the Spirit will endow us with power and all the other gifts. None of us can afford to be without them. None of us has enough wisdom, enough intelligence, enough knowledge, enough skills, or enough courage, by ourselves, to master our lives and even to succeed in life unless we learn what it means to surrender ourselves into the arms of the Lord and be filled with the Spirit. He wants to empower us with the gifts that he has promised to give to each of his disciples who has made sacred covenants with him.

Why do some members seem to not be clear when it comes to the understanding of the workings of the Spirit? Obviously there is a need for an awareness to ensure the presence of the fullness of the Spirit on an ongoing basis. We as members seem to understand how beautiful it feels to be under the influence of the Spirit. As soon as I asked my missionaries what they experienced when they were under the influence of the Spirit, they were all participating, very diligently describing the very different effects that the Spirit has in our lives. They agreed that being under the influence of the fullness of the Spirit fills us with satisfying joy and makes it easy to make necessary adjustments, even in the most difficult circumstances. This Spirit lets us develop the true potential of our intellectual capabilities and delivers even the motivation to use it. They agreed that under the influence of the Spirit, all uncomfortable things—such as hard work, getting up on time, going the extra mile, overcoming homesickness, overcoming flaws of character, and other things requiring sacrifice—are easy. It became clear that under the influence of the Spirit we act in wisdom. We see the complexity of a problem in its simple parts, and we see the possible solutions unfolding in front of our eyes—to our own surprise. In other words, our creativity is developed and

multiplied. That which is a burden without it becomes a privilege when we are under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Paul puts it all together beautifully in his letter to the Galatians: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22–23).

In my humble understanding, we, as members of the Church, should not be satisfied to be one single moment of our waking hours without the insightful, powerful influence of the Spirit. As Christ put it so simply, as we heard earlier: “[Those who] have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived . . . shall abide the day” (D&C 45:57).

In my understanding, maybe the most important principle that came to light in the message of the Restoration is the revelation that man is not a slave, not a victim of circumstances—that he is an agent for himself. When we have learned to understand this principle, we also may become aware of the somewhat frightening understanding of the consequences of this responsibility in our lives. We are no longer able to hide in ignorance or to blame circumstances or other factors that may have influenced us. Through Christ’s spirit we are liberated. Understanding this principle is a very important element for our own conversion. Seeing ourselves in our full responsibility means also seeing ourselves in our weaknesses, in our lost opportunities, and in our failures—which makes us humble and meek. We see the necessity to enter into a covenant with the author of life, to activate the atoning blood of Christ to wash us clean, and to embrace, gratefully, the gracious gift of the Holy Ghost for our essential empowerment. Many times in our life it happens that these gifts of the Spirit rest dormant in us. We are not even aware of their existence, as it was with my missionaries. Did they not have the Spirit? Of course they did. They had even passed the ultimate test. They had forsaken their own self-centered

plans and had surrendered completely and totally under the will of the Lord to become sacred witnesses for him. Still, they had not fully understood the conditions of the workings of the Spirit. Why did the one elder feel the Spirit as he was teaching the Lehman family? Because at that time he and his companion were completely focused in their search for divine guidance. Too often we are not aware of the powerful gift that rests dormant in us. We cannot be grateful for that of which we are not aware, and we cannot activate its power.

The Spirit is a divine entity. It therefore gives the ultimate example of politeness. It will not intrude into our lives. It will not force itself into our lives except under circumstances in which we may endanger our salvation—for instance, by breaking a covenant. As we read in Doctrine and Covenants 76:47: “I, the Lord, show it [the torments of hell] by vision unto many, but straightway shut it up again.” The Holy Ghost has been given to us as a gift, but it can only become an active part of our lives when we become aware of its dormant state and develop in our souls a desire to awaken the Spirit to life. This is, of course, easier said than done. In our understanding of the freedoms in our personal responsibility, we must become aware of the nature of our own desires and learn to channel them on the most important issue of our lives—to make it our desire for the Holy Ghost to be with us.

When we read the scriptures carefully, we can learn that the Lord, through his prophets, leads us to understand our need to look at our own desires. I have asked myself several times, Why would the author of our eternal existence, whom we are allowed to call reverently Heavenly Father, ask us, through his prophets, to look at our desires? For instance, we read in Alma 29:4: “I know that he granteth unto men according to their desire, whether it be unto death or unto life.” And in Alma 32:27:

But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you.

And in Doctrine and Covenants 6:8: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, even as you desire of me so it shall be unto you.”

In *The Problem of Pain* (p. 66), C. S. Lewis gave us an interesting insight about this same question when he quoted William Law:

*If you will here stop, and ask yourselves, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. [William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (London: J. M. Dent; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), p. 13]*

Desires are working in us. All of our life’s actions are the result of our desires. When we want to honor the great gift of the Spirit, which God has given us, we have to become aware of whether we are under its influence or not. When we are not satisfied with the world of our own feelings—when we are grouchy and unhappy or we are slothful or sloppy—we must know that we are not under the influence of the Holy Spirit. People who sin are not under his influence. They have not put on the armor of God. They are not in a state of, awakening.

The Spirit of Christ teaches us that we must pray, that we must ask for the things that we seek. As we read in 2 Nephi 32:8: “For if ye would hearken unto the Spirit . . . ye would know that ye must pray.” But before we can do this with focus, we have to become aware of a multitude of defined or undefined, conscious or subconscious desires. We have to learn to bring them to our awareness, to analyze them, to categorize them, and to bring them in to order according to priorities. When we do

not do this, we will be condemned to remain, in our prayers, on a superficial level, or even on the level of formality, where there are no answers or there are only imagined answers. But there are always hundreds of different desires fighting for supremacy within us. The act of categorizing them is a very painful, but needful act to become, in the eyes of God, a mature person and to be taken seriously. So often we say things that we really don't mean. Sometimes we want to be funny and, in reality, we chase the Spirit away. We cannot be light-minded and expect the Spirit to take us seriously. We need to be thorough and responsible for the Spirit to take notice. When we are not organized and focused, we may wish for things that are really irrelevant or even dangerous. They may stem from the legitimate needs of our physical body—such as the needs for food, shelter, and rest—but our physical body is mostly capable of reflecting the self-centered orientation of the foolishness of the flesh. But the real part of us, or the real me, the spirit child of God, on the other hand, is the author of our righteous desires, of our hunger for salvation, and of our longing to eventually become reunited with our heavenly home. When the Light of Christ is able to penetrate our hearts, prompted by the enlightened testimony of truth by a focused teacher, it will cause in us a state of awakening, an awakening of the real me, the child of God, so that we can learn to channel our desires to focus on our true needs.

The literal performance of acts of religion alone cannot bring us eternal life. As we read in Deuteronomy 28:47–48:

Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things:

and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.

I found the other day an interesting thought from John Cassian, who was a Christian teacher born in A.D. 354. In a paraphrased translation from the German text, I quote:

*It is easier for a worldly person to come to a healing change of his life, or even to the top of perfection, than a tired saint who is fallen from his first enthusiasm, because the worldly man will go through pain and agony and, sooner or later, he will not be able to stand it any longer, and will rush in the depths of depression to the source of true cleansing. But, when somebody has begun to pollute his name as a saint, without joyfulness and enthusiasm, he will still feel safe and, therefore, will not recognize what he is missing and, therefore, he is not easy to be taught. He will say in his heart, I'm blessed. I know it all and need nobody. [Johannes Cassian, *Spannkraft der Seele* (Freiburg: Herder, 1981), pp. 149–50; or see John Cassian, *Collations (Conferences) 4:19*]*

The ordinances and principles of the restored gospel are the vehicles to fill us with the Holy Spirit, but serving without joyfulness, as we just heard, is an abomination in the eyes of God and will bear no fruit. We call the acts of righteously focused and magnified desires *faith*, and upon the principle of faith are the powers of heaven moved, through the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Paul declared to the Romans the indispensable need to live our lives by faith, as he says: “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). The original word in the Bible for the word *sin* is *hamartia*. The word *hamartia* means “missing the mark,” deriving from the sport of archery. In modern English we would probably call it “shooting an air ball.” When we do not do everything in our life in faith or, in other words, under the influence of the Holy Spirit,

we are missing the mark. We are off target. When we are off target, we will not feel the confidence and joy and power of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, we will have to learn to direct our desires toward repentance—we must change to bring us back on target. In my humble understanding, it can be said that there are only two elements that separate us from the Holy Spirit: First, our lack of desire to repent, and, second, our lack of desire to forgive.

Under the influence of the Light of Christ, we can empower our lives to the awareness of our most important needs. We must ask for the Holy Ghost to be with us, as the Nephites asked in 3 Nephi 19:9: “And they did pray for that which they most desired; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them.”

In the time of my membership in the Church, I have grown to understand that this is the most important priority in our lives. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will not sin. We will be filled with wisdom, and we will be able to have the fruits to heal the wounds of the afflicted and to build a community of Saints. It is also obvious that without constant efforts, it will be very difficult to always be focused on our most righteous desires. Therefore, I want to share with you a vehicle, an instrument, that I developed some time ago for myself and for my family. It can assist us to reach our focus as we read the suggested vision of true discipleship as a Latter-day Saint. It helps when, from time to time, we ponder and seek identification with the following thoughts:

- Embrace this day with an enthusiastic welcome, no matter how it looks. The covenant with God to which you are true enables you to become enlightened by him, and nothing is impossible for you.
- When you are physically sick, tired, or in despair, steer your thoughts away from

yourself and direct them, in gratitude and love, toward God.

- In your life there have to be challenges. They will either bring you closer to God and therefore make you stronger, or they can destroy you. But you make the decision of which road you take.
- First and foremost, you are a spirit child of God. If you neglect to feed your spirit, you will reap unhappiness. Don’t permit anything to detract you from this awareness.
- You cannot communicate with God unless you have first sacrificed your self-oriented natural man and have brought yourself into the lower levels of meekness, to become acceptable for the Light of Christ.
- Put all frustrations, hurt feelings, and grumbings into the perspective of your eternal hope. Light will flow into your soul.
- Pause to ponder the suffering Christ felt in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the awareness of the depth of gratitude for him, you appreciate every opportunity to show your love for him by diligently serving in his Church.
- God knows that you are not perfect. As you suffer about your imperfections, he will give you comfort and suggestions of where to improve.
- God knows better than you what you need. He always attempts to speak to you. Listen, and follow the uncomfortable suggestions that he makes to us—everything will fall into its place.
- Avoid any fear like your worst enemy, but magnify your fear about the consequences of sin.
- When you cannot love someone, look into that person’s eyes long enough to find the hidden rudiments of the child of God in him.
- Never judge anyone. When you accept this, you will be freed. In the case of your own children or subordinates, where you have the responsibility to judge, help them to become their own judges.

- If someone hurts you so much that your feelings seem to choke you, forgive and you will be free again.
- Avoid at all cost any pessimistic, negative, or criticizing thoughts. If you cannot cut them out, they will do you harm. On the road toward salvation, let questions arise but never doubts. If something is wrong, God will give you clarity but never doubts.
- Avoid rush and haste and uncontrolled words. Divine light develops in places of peace and quiet. Be aware of that as you enter places of worship.
- Be not so much concerned about what you do, but do what you do with all your heart, might, and strength. In thoroughness is satisfaction.
- You want to be good and to do good. That is commendable. But the greatest achievement that can be reached in our lives is to be under the complete influence of the Holy Ghost. Then he will teach us what is really good and necessary to do.
- The pain of sacrifice lasts only one moment. It is the fear of the pain of sacrifice that makes you hesitate to do it.
- Be grateful for every opportunity to serve. It helps you more than those you serve.
- And finally, when you are compelled to give up something or when things that are dear to you are withdrawn from you, know that this is your lesson to be learned right now. But know also that, as you are learning this lesson, God wants to give you something better.

I think at this time it seems appropriate to ask the question "Do I really think it's possible for us, as human beings, to be always, in a complete way, under the influence of the Holy Spirit?" My answer is without hesitation, "No, it is not." It is not given to us to live in this world and to be without sin. Created by God in a spiritual body, but living with a body of flesh and bone in this unexalted and fallen state, we become polluted. We will not always be able to understand and comprehend the sinister plans

of the adversary in his fight to destroy us and to make us as miserable as he is. But when we are constantly aware of this fight and we let the Light of Christ help us stand in our responsibilities, we may be able to stay on this narrow path where we will see, with clarity, that we are lost without the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although it is not possible to be perfect as long as we are in this earthly state, we still have to be perfect in keeping the commandments of our covenants. We are assisted in this situation by our living prophets, who suggest to us to have, at least once a year, an interview with our bishop. During this interview we can establish that we are in harmony with the covenants we have made with the living God. When we are in such a way perfected and are eligible to go in his holy house, the temple, we have the promise that Jesus Christ will take upon him the rest and we can rejoice in being cleansed through his redeeming blood every day of our lives. Our soul will sing to the praise of his name, and our hearts will be so full that we cannot be quiet but will share and testify of the reality of this work and the power in it.

Thus, we prepare all the days of our lives, and, as we grow, death loses its sting, hell loses its power, and we look forward to that day with anticipation and joy when he will come in his glory.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us learn to rejoice. As one of the fruits of the Spirit, rejoice in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the power that is in our life. Understand the magnitude and the vastness of it. Let us be reverent in learning and listening. As we do so, we may become aware that we still are in the beginning phases of the Lord's marvelous work, which one day will fill the whole earth.

I give you my witness that I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, that this is truly his work, and that when we take the liberation that comes from Christ and choose right, and choose eternal life, and choose that the Holy Spirit will always be

with us, we will be able to live our lives in dignity and in virtue and rejoice every day in our lives. I give you this testimony and my blessing, and I do so in humility as your servant, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.