

<Asia Area Leader Message>
The Gospel of Jesus Christ

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My job has taken me to many countries ravaged by natural disasters. In these devastated regions, there are countless injuries and deaths, and hearths and homes seem to be in utter ruin. Survivors often suffer severe trauma and heartache. Man-made calamities are also incredibly destructive in nature, as page after page of history reveals. My father once said to me, “Those of my generation are most unfortunate. I lived through several wars, and the destruction and aftermath of man slaughtering each other is the true tragedy of life!”

As terrifying as natural disasters are, spiritual calamities are even more so. They come from a war that can't be seen with our physical eyes, the resulting havoc of which is nothing short of the injury and destruction of souls. The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians said, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

The progress and prosperity of today's society, along with its technological advances, have lurking behind them a hotbed of sin. Mortal life is so fleeting, and yet many do not take thought of eternal life. Instead, they risk all in pursuit of wealth and power. Some live in darkness, and others are even willing to sell their souls to Satan in exchange for a life of luxury and transient enjoyments.

The gospel of Jesus Christ can help us withstand spiritual calamities. Paul reminds us to not be foolish; rather, we must rely on Christ the Lord, even to rely on His matchless power, and understand His will toward us. He taught, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:14-17).

The gospel of Jesus Christ can help us avoid spiritual calamities. It is said that “spiritual disease requires a spiritual doctor.” Only Jesus Christ's atonement can cure the spiritual ailments that exist among us. The Savior's gospel teaches us to recognize, feel remorse for, confess, make recompense for, forgive, and forsake sin. Christ's atoning sacrifice makes our receiving a forgiveness of sin a possibility. The Bible records, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18). Christ lived a sinless life, and yet was willing to suffer. He was mocked and ridiculed on the cross, and he bled every last drop of blood in giving his life for us. We have sinned, and yet are prideful. Those living in darkness often view that which is repulsive and evil as a thing of beauty, and that which is painful and bitter as a source of happiness. Some are even willing to sacrifice all in the pursuit of material goods and chose carnal pleasures over spirituality.

The gospel of Jesus Christ can help us obtain spiritual blessings. Society is filled with people, including both those poor and those wealthy, who are weary from the emptiness in life, and yet can't find inner peace. You might think that the smiles that often grace their faces are genuine. In reality, it's just a facade, and when no one is looking a frown creeps back on. The Lord's gospel can fill the emptiness in these people's hearts and help them to find spiritual peace and true happiness. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

I like what it says in Psalms 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Those who rely solely on their own mental faculties will never come to an understanding of spiritual matters. The Holy Spirit and evil spirits can only be discerned through spiritual means. The gospel of Jesus Christ has a depth and substance to it that is truly enlightening. It is through humility that we can comprehend the greatness of God!

I testify Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice has already overcome death! "And this is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us --that he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness" (D&C 76:40-41). If we can be uninfluenced by spiritual calamities and keep the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ to the end, we can obtain exaltation, thrones, principalities, powers, immortality, and eternal life --all of the blessings of the fullness of Christ's gospel! In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■