

Podcast Episode 18: Prayer, Part 2

QUESTION: What is earnest prayer like, and what can happen as a result of crying to the Lord?

DENVER: Throughout the record of the brother of Jared, never once does the word "pray/prayer" appear. When the voice of Moroni emerges into the narrative, the word "prayed" appears in Moroni's aside. But in the record of the brother of Jared, he does not ever use the word "pray" or "prayer." He "cried."

Consider for a moment the difference between being someone who prays to God and someone who "cries" unto God. Consider the position in which the petitioner has voluntarily placed himself, when instead of coming in prayer, he comes rather "crying out unto the Lord." Keep that word in mind. Eleven times it's mentioned in the book of Ether in the account that's dealing with the brother of Jared. The only time the word "prayer" appears is in the interlude. That's the way you can know that Moroni is abridging a record that belongs to someone else, because he doesn't use the same word as the person whose record he's abridging. He uses "prayer," one time.

This is what he cried out: *"O Lord, thou hast said that we must be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant..."* (Ether 3:2). Crying, asking Him not to be angry, reducing himself to being merely a servant, because of his "weakness before thee." What is this man's attitude? How is this man approaching the throne of God? What does he view himself as? How does he regard God? Why does this man have such faith? Why does this man attract the attention of God? Why is God willing to speak to such a man, such a vessel as this? What is it about this, this attitude that this man possesses, that tells you his heart is right before God? He is willing to receive.

Some of you fear your own weakness. You are closer to God than those who are self-confident, proud of your understanding, and think yourselves better than others.

"...for we know that thou art holy..." This is the contrast: "my weakness"--"your holiness."
"...and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires."

“I’m doing what you asked because you commanded me. I don’t think myself qualified, but I’m obeying what you told me to do.” This is the attitude of the man. This is what the heart of the man reflects. And these words are why he “cries” to God.

"Behold, O Lord, thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity, and hast driven us forth, and for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock" (Ether 3:3).

There is no pride here. There is no resentment for being chastened. There is acceptance of the chastening hand of God. There is no proclamation that this man is worthy-- quite the opposite; he says he is unworthy. There is no resentment for having been punished. It is the opposite; he recognizes that every stumble along the way is justified, is reasonable, is earned, was appropriate. Because God, who cares for His children, upbraids and disciplines His children.

We don't know enough to be “good” in His sight. We aren't intelligent enough. We think that some pseudo-virtues that arise out of our culture are good indeed, when in fact, that behavior on display in the halls of heaven would be deeply offensive. And some of the things that we think are offensive to God are not at all. Not at all! And so our righteousness, at best, is pseudo-righteousness. And much of what we feel guilty about was given to us in order to give us the humility to come down here. And it will not last past the resurrection. Everything that you have been put through and every challenge that you have been given and every weakness that you possess have been given to you in a studied way to bring you, hopefully, to your knees-- to bring you, hopefully, to feel the chastening hand of God, so that you, in your day, in your circumstance, can look upon that as a gift, because it surely is.

"I give unto men weakness, that they may [come unto me,] and if they'll humble themselves [and come unto me], I'll make weak things...strong" (Ether 12:27). That’s also in the Book of Ether, and that’s an aside in which Moroni is complaining that the gentiles aren’t going to believe this book. The gentiles aren’t going to believe this record. They're going to say, “This stinks.”

Ether 12:26, *"When I had said this, the Lord [God] spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness" (Ether 12:26-27).* That's an unavoidability. That's an inevitability. You stand in the presence of a just and holy being, you're going to realize your weaknesses. You are going to recognize what you lack.

"I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

How do weak things become strong? Not by fighting a battle that you're going to lose. It's by appreciating, as the brother of Jared did, the fact that none of us can come into the presence of God without feeling keenly this scripture. "I..." (this is Christ speaking), "I give unto men weakness" for one purpose, "I give unto men weakness that they may be strong."

The anvil that you're dragging around, that anvil was given to you. Don't curse it. Pray for God to come and lift it. You are never going to be able to get far carrying it anyway. You may not even be able to lift it, but in the economy of God, that is a gift. It's a gift-- not for you to act upon and surrender to, but for you to fight against in humility and meekness and to say, "I'm not winning. I haven't won. It goes on and on, and yet still I fight against it."

When will you finally come to Him and cry out? When, in the bitter anguish of your soul, like Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail, "How long must I endure this? How long do I have to suffer from the abuse of the guards? How long do I have to sit inside a gated room, in a dungeon, to hear stories about the rape of the people who followed me and the murder of the people that believed what I was teaching?"

There's an incident that I think one word-- one word in this incident really explains a great deal of what I have been talking about in this installment. This is an event that occurs within the *Book of Mormon* that may seem otherwise quite puzzling. But now that we've looked at the Ether 3 material, and we go back, and we look at this incident, it suddenly begins to have a connection to it.

This is in Alma 22. It involves Lamoni's father, the king. I want you to look at the father beginning in verse 17 of Alma 22: *"And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried [and cried] mightily, saying...."*

It's not the words of the prayer that provoked or gathered the attention of heaven, though the prayer is, in fact, needed, relevant, and exactly what the Lord answered-- it's what came before.

This is the king. This is the king that can have people killed if he chooses to do so. This is the one who, like God among his people, exercises the power of life and death. This is the one who can exact from them taxes. This is the one who has absolutely no reason to do what he's doing here. But look what he does-- he prostrates himself upon the ground, and he "cries out mightily."

He doesn't pray. He mirrors exactly what the brother of Jared did when he approached God. In the depths of humility and in the sincerity of his heart, showing absolutely his appreciation for the difference between himself, on the one hand, and God, on the other.

Don't mistake me-- I do not think it is necessary to physically engage in this kind of display. When the display is an extension of what is in the heart, that is absolutely fine. But when what is in the heart is right, it doesn't matter how it's displayed, because God looketh on the inner man. This king was so overtaken by what he had heard, that he was not ashamed to prostrate himself in front of the missionaries. He was not ashamed to cry out in the depths of humility. He didn't care who saw it. He didn't do this for to be seen. He didn't care that he was being seen. He did this because at that moment, that was what he was. He was seeking grace from the throne of Grace.

"O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God..." Do you see this? This isn't someone who's certain. This is someone who is convicted of his own inadequacy. It may not be that you don't know enough, it may actually be that you know too much that's wrong. It may be that what you lack-- it's all going to be erased and started over anyway. If you could gaze into heaven for five minutes, you'd realize that people that have been writing about this stuff since the beginning of time, who haven't gazed into heaven, don't know what they're talking about. The suppositions and the connections and the ideas that get floated around are not only false, many of them are offensive to God. They're not right. The board's going to be erased. God's going to re-order it. You're going to see things in a completely different light when it happens. It's not that you're brilliant and a shining light of knowledge-- it's what's in your heart, and how has your heart been prepared, and if your heart is open to receive.

"I will give away all my sins to know thee, that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day. And now when the king had said these words, he was struck as if he were dead." And then look what happens when he recovers, because as he was struck as if he were dead, he's converted. The Lord ministers to him, and in verse 23: *"...the king stood forth, and began to minister unto them. And he did minister unto them, insomuch that his whole household were converted unto the Lord."* This is what happens when converted to the Lord. You can't stand to look about you and see other people who are left in the dark. You want to invite them, rather as Nathaniel was invited, "Come, and see for yourself." *You* come to the Lord, *you* come and see for yourself. This little bit of skeptical praying, if there's a God, "If thou art God, will you make yourself known to me?" That worked! But not because this is a magic incantation.

Those folks who go through ceremonies think that ceremonies have some powerful mojo, some compelling voodoo. But the purpose of ceremony is to teach you a precept. The precept is what you ought to find within your heart. Rites and ordinances are intended to testify to a greater truth.

It was anciently among the Jews, it is an Aaronic priesthood function to turn around and look at the ordinance as if it were an end in itself. It is not an end in itself. It is intended to be a symbol reminding you of some great truth concerning our God.

The capstone of the ceremonies that were restored through Joseph involving a dialogue between you and the Lord in which you're brought back into His presence, and then following that, you're taken away and you're sealed for eternity-- those are lofty concepts. They are powerfully portrayed in the ordinances and the rites. They are intended to convey to you the reality that all of this is possible because God does, in fact, intend to preserve you and all of those associations that you prize, so long as they're worthy.

Don't think you lack the faith! If this king, with this prayer, can go to God and can ask and get an answer, that's not the impediment. The impediment is the pride of your heart, the hardness of your heart, the self-reliance that you think that you own, the traditions that bind you down, the arrogance of your heart, the unwillingness to cry out mightily to God and then to be open to receiving an answer. This was enough, and you, too, can do enough.

The Lord tells a story in Mark. This is Mark 9. Beginning at verse 17, there's this fellow who comes to Christ and says, "Master, I have brought thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit. The spirit overtakes him; he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth. I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; they could not." And Christ says: "*O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?*" (Mark 9:19). They brought the boy unto him. He saw him; straightway the spirit tore him, and he fell on the ground, wallowed foaming. He asked the father, "How long has it been since this came unto him?" And he said: "*Of a child. And oftentimes it cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on [him], and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth....Straightway the father of the child cried out,*" cried out, "*and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*" (Mark 9:21-24). Help thou mine unbelief.

You don't need more of what you already have. Why are you here? Look at this man whose heart was broken on this day. He cried out, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief. I have a desire, I have a willingness. But it is so fragile; it is so frail. I don't think it's enough." That's not the problem. Cry out; ask Him.

Remember His disciples who'd been following Him, His disciples who were His faithful followers-- His disciples couldn't fix this boy. And they had given up everything to come and follow Him! Jesus healed Him. After the incident the disciples came to Him and said, "Why

could we not cast him out?" Christ answered to them: *"This kind can come forth by nothing, but prayer and fasting"* (Mark 9:29).

Why do you have to be afflicted by prayer and fasting if you're a follower of the Lord, in order to get to the point that you can accomplish this? Because you don't fall prostrate, crying out with tears. If this man, in this condition, can say "I believe, help thou mine unbelief," if this man can do this and have the Lord on his behalf work a miracle, you, too, can believe enough. You, too, can accomplish what you desire. You, too, can come to Him.

Matthew covers the same incident, but in Matthew he picks up-- this is Matthew chapter 17, beginning at verse 19: *"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind [come] not out but by prayer and fasting"* (Matthew 17:19-21).

Faith as a grain of mustard seed was what the Lord said they needed. The defect does not consist in the absence of faith in the Lord. The defect consists in the arrogance and hardness of the heart that prevents you from crying out, in the realistic and anguish of your heart, looking to God who is trying to bring you to Him. That depth of humility, that status of being someone who is utterly harmless, that condition in which you present no threat to the righteous, you are harmless as a dove, you seek only the betterment of others-- that is who God is, and what you must become in order for God to be able to redeem you to be like Him. That's you voluntarily changing to be that person, by your submission to Him. Because there is no reason to give to the proud, the vain, and the warlike the ability to torment and to afflict others. There is every reason to give to someone who would ultimately be willing to give the rain to fall on the righteous and the wicked and make the sun to shine on both the righteous and the wicked-- the power of God. Because the power of godliness consists in this kind of a heart. And in this kind of a heart, God can accomplish anything.

All of these examples, the petition that is made to God is not prayer-- all of these examples are crying out to Him. In Romans chapter 4, he's talking about Father Abraham. And in verse 3 he talks about Abraham believed God; it was counted unto him for righteousness. Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Verse 13-- the promise that he should be an heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Because Abraham believed in God, he trusted in Him, therefore he inherited, he inherited it all, the world. He's the father of the righteous.

Beginning at verse 17: *"[As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,] before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which [were] not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform"* (Romans 4:17-21).

There was no proof that an aged-- "dead," that is-- now impotent, old man could sire a child with a barren, post-menopausal Sarah. But Abraham doubted not, and you have before you promises spoken by the voice of an angel concerning the things God has in store for your day, and you doubt? And you question? And you think God not able to bring about what He has said He intends to do?

The very day that they have looked forward to, from the beginning of the days of Adam down till now (as we looked at in Centerville)-- you doubt that God can bring this to pass? You doubt that what I have been talking about since we began in Boise and have now arrived here-- if God can send someone to declare these things to you, in the confidence and the faith and the knowledge that I'm speaking to you on His errand, and I can do it in this room, in this building, in this city-- salvation comes to you today by the word of God. And you doubt that God can make a holy place somewhere that has not been trodden under the foot of the gentiles? You doubt that God can bring to pass His work in culminating the ages? Have the faith of a grain of mustard seed, because it is coming. It is going to happen, and if you lack the faith, you will not be invited.

This required Abraham to endure the test of his faith. It is not easy. I want to take you back into an incident, remarkable in its own way, really. 1 Samuel 17. Entire armies of Israel had been put to shame. And David, bringing cheese and bread to his brothers, hears what's going on, and he says, "Well, I'll go out, and I'll smite that godless Philistine."

And so it was that in verse 34 of chapter 17 of 1 Samuel: *"David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep...there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine"* (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

So this is David, who had every confidence-- despite everyone else hanging back, looking across the valley, and saying, "I'll pass"-- David says, "Yeah, I'll go out. I'll take care of him. I've killed a bear, I've killed a lion, I could kill this guy. I mean, there's no difference here, really." Because David did not see this necessarily as a conflict between man and man, mano a mano. He saw this as a conflict between man and God. All that was required was that someone go out there who believed in God, and God would take care of the fight. The battle is the Lord's. It always has been. The battle is the Lord's, and therefore, the Lord is able to deliver. But here is where it gets interesting.

Skip to verse 39: *"David girded his sword upon his armor, and assayed to go; for he had not proved [them]. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. David put them off him..."* He got rid of the sword; he got rid of the armor; he got rid of everything. *"And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine"* (1 Samuel 17:39-40). So on his way out to the battle, he stops at the brook, and he picks up five stones. Okay?

Skip ahead to verse 49: *"David put his hand in his bag, took thence a stone, slang it, smote the Philistine in his forehead."* He needed one. David needed one. David approached him by picking up five. David believed that the Lord would kill Goliath, but David picked up five stones. He had enough faith. But it doesn't mean he had such confidence that he armed himself with one stone. 'Cuz when you cross the brook, and you head on in, where are you going to find another smooth stone? And it's a smooth stone, preferably round, that's going to carry the trajectory true. He's a slinger. He knew that he needed that kind of stone. So as he crossed the brook, he picked up five.

In all of these examples, you see exactly the same thing. You see you. That's what you see. Oh, the great and the mighty and the powerful, and the miraculous and the wonderful, and the ones about whom we read-- they're *you*. They have the same insecurities as you. "I'll give away all my sins to know you." That's a bargain worth making, and then it's a bargain worth keeping.

Be believing. You have faith enough, but also have faith enough in what we read earlier. I want to read it again. *"Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, according to his own will"* (D&C 88:68). He, and not you, control that.

Many of those to whom these promises are made will receive the vindication of the promise in the last moments of their life. Alvin, as he lay dying, had angels come minister to him. Joseph would later see him in the celestial kingdom, but it was in the throes of death when angels ministered to brother Alvin.

Stephen, when he was being stoned, had the heavens opened to him. In the last moments of his life, suffering a brutal form of execution, he's praying because he's so filled with the Spirit by what he's beholding, having the heavens opened to him, that he's praying for those who were in the process of killing him.

St. Francis of Assisi, living in an apostate era, in an apostate church, believed and followed the Sermon on the Mount. His heart was pure and as the last month of St. Francis' life drew to a close, angels came and ministered to him.

Our idea of what it takes to be pure before God is not the same thing as God's view of what it takes to be pure before Him.

Turn to Luke chapter 18, because there the Lord pretty much tells you how it is He evaluates whether someone has purified themselves before Him. This is a story that the Lord makes up in chapter 18 of Luke, telling a parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

Beginning at verse 10: *"Two men went into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"* (Luke 18:10-14).

God can only exalt the meek because only the meek can be trusted. This is what it means to sanctify yourself. Our idea of purity and Christ's idea are entirely based on different criteria. Why is meekness required of a God, by a God? What would happen if God Himself were not patient, willing to suffer abuse, and be rejected? What would happen if God were egotistical? What would happen if God did not return blessings for cursings? What would happen if God were not exactly what He preached in the Sermon on the Mount? What if God did not bless those who spitefully used and abused Him? What would happen if God did not submit Himself to fall into the hands of wicked men, to be despised and rejected? And then to be killed in shame, hanging naked on a cross, in full view of the world, while people spit upon Him and mocked Him and ridiculed Him, saying, "If you really are what you say you are, come down from the cross; then we will believe."

Woe unto all those who say, "If you really are who you say you are..." when the voice of God is sounding in their ears, they would have rejected the Lord as well. They would have crucified the

Lord as well. They are not His sheep because they do not hear His voice. If they were His sheep, they would hear His voice.

If we're required to develop the attributes of Christ, how is it possible for us to do so unless God patiently tries to persuade us to voluntarily be like Him? And how can you hope to be like Him if you refuse to be persuaded?

God came as one of the weak things of this world. The only way He is ever going to invite you is through one of the weak things of this world, speaking in weakness, asking you to be persuaded. It doesn't matter how earnest I am, I know my standing before God. What matters is your willingness to be persuaded. Over that, I have no control and want no control. Over that, I simply put the case as the Lord has put it to me, in the hopes that what He has to offer and what He says needs to be said will get through to you. But your relationship and your accountability is not to me, it's to Him. Therefore, be persuaded. Be persuaded.

In Christ's example of praying (I'm talking about His example now, I'm not talking about what He said), Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, told you that prayer ought to be done in secret. *"When thou prayest,"* this is Matthew [6] beginning at verse 5, *"And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. When ye pray, use not vain repetitions,"* and so on (Matthew 6:5-7).

So, look, I've given opening prayers in sacrament meeting. I've given opening prayers in High Council meetings. I've given opening prayers in Stake Conferences. I've given opening prayers one time in a meeting Bruce R McConkie was the visiting general authority for. I've given opening prayers in a lot of settings, and I have to tell you, when praying in secret, I don't have to worry about what anyone else thinks about my vocabulary, content, incomplete sentences, dangling participles, stupid notions. I don't have to worry about any of that. It is between me and God. But when I'm standing on the corner, or in the pulpit, or before people and praying, you may be better than I am, but I have never been able to pray in public in those settings without at least some concern about the words coming out of my mouth and their effect upon the audience. I have always felt like I was delivering more of a sermon than a prayer to God. That's a weakness I have you may have, too. Christ deals with that by how He teaches us to pray.

Our Lord's example of prayer was so private that His disciples had to come to Him and say, "Lord teach us how to pray." They witnessed Him praying. When the Lord went to pray, He went out alone, apart. Sometimes He spent all night praying. But the fact that He prayed, while

that was known, the content of the prayer was gone. What He said was not known. There are two examples that we have. We have the example that He gives us in the Sermon on the Mount which is largely in response to the question of, "Teach us how to pray." He tells you how to pray. And then there is the forlorn prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He's begging to have a cup removed from Him.

When our Lord prayed, even though prayers might have lasted overnight, they were in private. He lived what He taught. He did what He said. And I don't want to tempt people to surrender the same weakness I have, and that is, to do so for to be seen of men, simply because men are listening.

Go to John chapter 17. This is another thing about the prayer-- the prayers of Christ. Verse 1-- this is the Great Intercessory Prayer. *"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven."* When Christ prayed, He didn't bow His head or fold His arms. He addressed His Father who's in heaven, and He looked; His eyes were lifted up.

Go to John, back to chapter 11 again. This is in John chapter 11 verse 41: *"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me."* Again, addressing His Father by lifting His eyes up.

Now I understand in some of the examples of contrition that we've looked at that they fell prostrate on the ground. I know that they had bowed themselves, saying that they didn't, in Christ's example, not so much beat on their breast, and not so much as lift their eyes up to heaven. But the presumption implicit in the example the Lord gives is that His eyes should be lifted up to heaven when he's addressing the Father.

How would you like it [turning his back to the audience, bowing his head, and folding his arms] if I talked to you like this? Maybe I'll finish the talk this way. [Returning]

Look, pray to Him. Pray to Him and realize that as you reach up to Him, He would rather reach down to you with greater enthusiasm than any of you can muster. But in order to establish the necessary conditions for our development, there was a law ordained before the foundation of the world upon which all blessings are predicated. And that law is as easily accessible by the father of King Lamoni as it is accessible to the father of the young man who was overtaken and fell into the fire and fell into the water. It is as accessible to the brother of Jared as it is accessible to you. Because when the law before the foundation of the world was ordained, it was intended for all men to possibly receive of God's fullness. And if receiving of His fullness required a course in rabbinical reasoning or an advanced theological degree, there would be almost none who are saved. But the *Book of Mormon* gives us account after account. And what happens to those who

do not possess the required soft heart and willingness to bow? They come away saying, "[God] maketh no such thing known unto us" (1 Nephi 15:9). And like Laman and Lemuel, they establish for themselves, with their iron necks and their brass bowels, an inability to look up unto God and be saved.

So if the apostle Paul, who is so ill-fitted to Christianity that he's going about trying to kill Christians, can qualify for God's miraculous intervention in his life, then a person of faith, as long as they are headed in the right direction, should be able to get the attention of God and angels. So it did not surprise me at all when Joseph went out to pray in the grove, and as he began that search, he got attacked by the adversary, and then calling upon God with all his strength he got delivered-- it did not surprise me when I got attacked by a malevolent source before I encountered an angel. And it didn't put me off the trail-- it, in fact, I was again stupid enough to say, "Oh, this is kind of like what happened when Joseph was trying to approach God, he encountered opposition." So to me, the opposition suggested the presence of God and God's reality and God's bonafide existence and work. Because if the enemy is there, there has to be the opposite of the enemy also. It was some time later that I encountered an angel. And I haven't talked much about the miraculous things that have gone on because I don't think that it's particularly helpful to put a lot of details out about any of that stuff.

But I want you to know that it does happen. And it happens as much today in people of faith as it happens in the course of the scriptures. I do not believe for one moment that God carefully limits and cautiously apportions the things that come from Him to a select few. I think that God's abundance is met for everyone, and the regulator, the inhibitor, the limiter isn't up there, it's within us.

The foregoing are excerpts from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25th, 2014; and
- Denver's remarks at "A Day of Faith and Connection" youth conference in UT on June 10th, 2017.