

SISTER ELAINE S. DALTON

## “I STAND ALL AMAZED”



In one of my favorite hymns about the Savior, the first line says, “I stand all amazed at the *love* Jesus offers me.”<sup>1</sup> As I contemplate the Savior’s matchless life, His mission, and His ministry, truly I do stand all amazed at His love, His life, and His infinite Atonement for you and for me. I stand all amazed at His ability to come to earth and show us what to do, to mark the path and show the way to become like Him, and to enable us to return back into our Heavenly Father’s presence proven, pure, and sealed in holy temples as eternal families.

If I could add verses to this hymn, I would also say, I stand all amazed not only at His love but at His condescension, His patience, His humility, His self-control,

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## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

His focus, His desire to serve, His ability to teach and reach the one, His miracles, and His ability to bear our sins, sorrows, suffering, and imperfections. I stand all amazed at His matchless devotion and love for His Father, His virtue and purity, and the virtue of His infinite Atonement. And yes, I am “confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me,”<sup>2</sup> which is an enabling power that makes it possible to have strength, abilities, and power beyond my own.

Yes, I truly do stand all amazed!

## LOVE

Frequently I ponder the same question that has been asked by others,<sup>3</sup> which is not *how* did he do it, but *why* did he do it? In the Grand Councils of Heaven, as the

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Firstborn of the Father, He volunteered, saying simply, “Here am I; send me.”<sup>4</sup> Why? What prompted Him to volunteer? What desire, relationship, or gain?

As I have pondered His life, His ministry, and His mission, the *why* becomes clear.

Everything He did was motivated by one thing—and one thing only. It was and is *love*. He was not motivated by power, position, or possessions. His motive was not political, and it was not to seek popularity. His motive was pure. He was motivated by *pure love*. He never betrayed His Father or our faith in Him, although he was betrayed because of His love for Heavenly

## “I STAND ALL AMAZED”

Father and us. He gave us reason to hope. He taught us through His actions about a different kind of love—charity, the pure love of Christ.<sup>5</sup> He could offer that kind of love only because He was pure in His motives, in His actions, and in His love. And though He was despised for it, He went about doing good because He was good.<sup>6</sup> He used His priesthood power to heal the sick and cause the lame to walk,<sup>7</sup> to discern, to bless, to teach, and to draw us close to Him. Through this power, He performed miracles. He raised the dead. He changed water to wine. He fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes. His love for the Father and for us was pure—no motives, no agendas. He simply declared, “I and my Father are one.”<sup>8</sup> “And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”<sup>9</sup> He loved us as His Father loved us: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should . . . have everlasting life.”<sup>10</sup> In the world in which we live, with the motives and forces that work in the world, this truly unique attitude and approach is cause for each of us, even *all*, to stand all amazed. Do we always do those things that please the Father? How can we too become one with the Savior and the Father?

## ATONEMENT

On a crisp fall morning, the day before Thanksgiving several years ago, I came to more deeply understand the Savior’s love and the individual nature of His infinite Atonement. Early that morning, I went on a run with several friends. We called it our “thankful run.” As we ran that

## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

morning, we called out randomly the things for which we were thankful. The air was crisp. It had snowed lightly and the world was spectacular; it was an ideal morning to run, and feelings of gratitude rushed over me as I did so. I had just finished calling out that I was thankful for a strong, healthy body when I stepped on a patch of black ice, hidden by the skiff of snow. I slipped, and before I knew it, I found myself lying on the road. As I tried to stand up, I realized that I had broken my leg just above the ankle. I won't attempt to describe to you how I knew. But later my husband said that if I had been a football player, I would have made the NFL highlight films that evening on television.

As I lay on the road, holding my leg so it wouldn't move, the pain was unbearable, and I was afraid I was going to faint. My friends ran to the nearest house with a light on and called my husband, who came immediately in the car. When I was loaded into my husband's car to be driven to the emergency room, one of my friends asked me what she could do to ease the pain. I asked her to sing to me. She began to sing, "I know that my Redeemer lives. What comfort this sweet sentence gives! . . . He lives to comfort me when faint. He lives to hear my soul's complaint. He lives to silence all my fears. He lives to wipe away my tears. He lives to calm my troubled heart. He lives all blessings to impart."<sup>11</sup>

When I heard those words, everything changed. He was right there with me and He bore my pain. At that moment, I knew—I knew I was not alone. I knew *He* knew. And I knew that through priesthood power and blessings and through His infinite Atonement, I would be all right.

“I STAND ALL AMAZED”

After I arrived at the emergency room at the hospital, I received a priesthood blessing from my husband and our five sons and was taken into surgery. When I was sent home, I was given numerous medications for pain. But I never felt any pain. I spent weeks in bed healing, and that could have posed a trial to one who is so used to being active. But I have to tell you that I would not trade that experience or those weeks when I was “broken” and “still” for anything because of the sweet spiritual experiences I had and the sure knowledge I gained of our Savior, of His love, and of the healing and enabling power of His Atonement.

That day several years ago, while lying in the road in pain, I felt broken. Have any of you ever felt broken, perhaps with a broken heart after having broken commandments? Have any of you experienced broken dreams, broken relationships, a broken spirit? I testify, He is there to heal us, to bear our pain, and to enable us to bear all things. I testify that through His infinite Atonement, broken things can mend—broken hearts, broken lives, broken bodies, and broken dreams.

Through this experience, I realized that this is why He invites us to take His yoke upon us. He invites and reminds us, saying, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. . . .

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## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”<sup>12</sup> And that day and since, I learned that His words are true because it is He that is on the other side of that yoke. And because He bore all things, He enables us to do the same. He strengthens us. He strengthened me. This is the enabling power of His Atonement. And I testify it is real. Yes, I stand all amazed at the grace that so fully He proffers me.

My desire from that time forth has been singular—to show my love to Him in all I do—to serve Him; to become like Him; to be His hands, His smile, His disciple. My desire is to help those who feel “broken” know that we do not ever walk alone—that the Savior is right there beside us. My desire is to help others know that even when we *feel* alone, He is *always* there. That is my *sure* knowledge. And yes, “I stand all amazed.”<sup>13</sup>

Recently I visited Liberty Jail. There in that temple jail I once again stood all amazed as I recalled the feelings of Joseph Smith, whose intimate association with the Savior did not spare him suffering or injustice. Even with that kind of experience, knowledge, and commitment in his heart, Joseph cried to the Lord from the darkness and uncertainty of Liberty Jail, “O God, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place? How long shall thy hand be stayed, and thine eye, yea thy pure eye, behold from the eternal heavens the wrongs of thy people and of thy servants, and thine ear be penetrated with their cries?”<sup>14</sup>

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*Right: Liz Lemon Swindle, Of One Heart, Joseph in Liberty Jail.*

*Courtesy of Foundation Arts.*



## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

I suppose there has been or will be times in our lives when we too will cry out in prayer, perhaps asking some of the same questions. There will be times when we too feel abandoned, isolated, helpless, hopeless, or alone. At these times, the very fact that the Lord responded is a testament to me that we really are never alone. The Lord knows us. He is there. His response to Joseph tutors each of us: "My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment; and then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes."<sup>15</sup> If thou endure it well!

As the Savior taught us by His example, the most important thing we can do when unexpected trials come is to "endure it well." Elder Richard G. Scott taught:

When you pass through trials for His purposes, as you trust Him, exercise faith in Him, He will help you. That support will generally come step by step, a portion at a time. While you are passing through each phase, the pain and difficulty that comes from being enlarged will continue. If all matters were immediately resolved at your first petition, you could not grow. Your Father in Heaven and His Beloved Son love you perfectly. They would not require you to experience a moment more of difficulty than is absolutely needed for your personal benefit or for that of those you love.<sup>16</sup>

We must respond to our challenges on the basis of our covenants rather than on the basis of our outrage over perceived injustices. It is our covenants that point us toward the Atonement. It is our covenants that help tether us on the path to exaltation. It is our covenants that help us to



## “I STAND ALL AMAZED”

become like Him—obedient, prayerful, willing to sacrifice and consecrate all, to always remember Him, to be guided by the Spirit, and to remain pure and unspotted from the world. We must always remember to keep our covenants just as He kept His. Because of His pure love for us, “The Son of Man hath descended below them all.” And we must ask ourselves, “Art thou greater than he?”<sup>17</sup>

As a marathon runner, I love the Lord’s next counsel given to Joseph and to us: “Therefore, hold on thy way, and the priesthood shall remain with thee; for their bounds are set, they cannot pass. Thy days are known, and thy years shall not be numbered less; therefore, fear not what man can do, for God shall be with you forever and ever.”<sup>18</sup> I love the message of that scripture—“hold on thy way.” “Press forward with a steadfastness in Christ,”<sup>19</sup> relying on the “merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah,”<sup>20</sup> and He “shall be with you forever and ever.”<sup>21</sup> He has promised each of us, “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up.”<sup>22</sup>

Because of His love for us, He descended below all things that we would suffer so that He would know how to *succor* us, or in other words, *run to* us in our time of greatest need. And that is exactly what happened to me. It was real and it was tangible, and I knew then and know now that whenever there is something so difficult that I cannot bear it, He will. He will be there to lift that load or burden or pain or infirmity.<sup>23</sup>

As Elder Sterling W. Sill once said, “You were not sent into the vineyard to eat the grapes.” The Lord fashioned



## “I STAND ALL AMAZED”

a testing center that would enable us to demonstrate our love for him by keeping our covenants with Him.<sup>24</sup> There will come times when we may want to cry out like Joseph, “O God, where art thou?” To such a question, there is really only one answer: I am here. I am always here. I will watch over you.

### SERVICE

It has been said that adoration of Him must always lead to emulation of Him.<sup>25</sup> President Thomas S. Monson has a beautiful painting of the Savior by the artist Heinrich Hoffman, hanging in his office where he can see it from his desk. He once said, “I have tried to pattern my life after the Master. Whenever I have had a difficult decision to make, I have always looked at that picture and asked myself, ‘What would He do?’ Then I try to do it.”<sup>26</sup>

President Henry B. Eyring teaches that keeping the first commandment naturally leads to keeping the second because to love the Father and the Son is to serve those they love and in that service, our love of God increases and our very nature changes. He said: “In the Master’s service, you will come to know and love Him. You will, if you persevere in prayer and faithful service, begin to sense that the Holy Ghost has become a companion. . . . The temptation to do evil seemed to lessen. The desire to do good increased. Those who knew you best and loved you may

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*Left: Heinrich Hoffman, Portrait of Christ, the Savior.*

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## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

have said, 'You have become more kind, more patient. You don't seem to be the same person.'"<sup>27</sup>

You wouldn't be the same person because the Atonement of Jesus Christ is real. And the promise is real that we can become new, changed, and better.

A year ago I was released from my calling as the Young Women general president. I loved having the opportunity to serve the Lord with all my heart, might, mind, and strength. I loved my associations with the Brethren, with the young women, and with their magnificent mothers and leaders. I loved teaching and training and testifying of the Savior, of His virtue, of His holy temple, and of His role in the great plan of happiness. I wondered for a long time what I could or should do next. Then one day, as I looked at a painting hanging on the wall of our bedroom of the Savior standing on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the great question that the Savior asked His Apostles on that shore came into *my* mind: "Lovest thou me?"<sup>28</sup> Elaine, lovest thou me?

As you recall, after the Savior's Crucifixion, His Apostles didn't know what to do. Peter's response was "I go a fishing."<sup>29</sup> In other words, "I guess I will just go back to my old life, my old ways, my previous comfort zone." Several of the other disciples agreed and followed Peter onto a fishing boat to resume the life they had left. That was exactly what I was thinking that morning lying in bed in our home with nowhere to go and nothing to do. "Well," I reasoned, "I will just go back to my old life—see the kids more, maybe even become a pest. Start playing tennis, run more, have great adventures, go back to the book club." But as I looked at that painting hanging

## “I STAND ALL AMAZED”

in our bedroom, it spoke so personally to me as I recalled that scene in the scriptures when the disciples went back to their “old life.” They fished all night and never caught a single fish. And then as morning approached, and they were headed to shore, they saw a distant figure standing on the shore and heard him call to them: “Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find,”<sup>30</sup> and they drew “a great multitude of fishes,”<sup>31</sup> enough that their nets broke, and “they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”<sup>32</sup> John recognized who was speaking and said, “It is the Lord.”<sup>33</sup> And then we know that Peter went over the edge of the boat and ran to the Savior standing on the shore. I can only imagine the joy of that reunion, but what happened next is the lesson I learned and want to share. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s words in his general conference talk entitled “The First Great Commandment” say it best. He taught, and I quote:

After a joyful reunion with the resurrected Jesus, Peter had an exchange with the Savior that I consider the crucial turning point of the apostolic ministry generally and certainly for Peter personally, moving this great rock of a man to a majestic life of devoted service and leadership. Looking at their battered little boats, their frayed nets, and a stunning pile of 153 fish, Jesus said to His senior Apostle, “Peter, do you love me more than you love all this?” Peter said, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

The Savior responds to that reply but continues to look into the eyes of His disciple and says again, “Peter, do you love me?” Undoubtedly confused a bit by the

## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

repetition of the question, the great fisherman answers a second time, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.”

The Savior again gives a brief response, but with relentless scrutiny He asks for the third time, “Peter, do you love me?” By now surely Peter is feeling truly uncomfortable . . . Whatever his feelings, Peter said for the third time, “Lord, . . . thou knowest that I love thee.”<sup>34</sup> To which Jesus responded . . . perhaps saying something like: “Then Peter, why are you here? Why are we back on this same shore, by these same nets, having this same conversation? Wasn’t it obvious then and isn’t it obvious now that if I want fish, I can get fish? What I need, Peter, are disciples—and I need them forever. I need someone to feed my sheep and save my lambs. I need someone to preach my gospel and defend my faith. I need someone who loves me, truly, truly loves me, and loves what our Father in Heaven has commissioned me to do. Ours is not a feeble message. It is not a fleeting task. It is not hapless; it is not hopeless; it is not to be consigned to the ash heap of history. It is the work of Almighty God, and it is to change the world.”<sup>35</sup>

I testify that this is the work of the Almighty God, and God so loved the world that He sent His Only Begotten Son. And yes, we are here to change the world! As President Eyring once taught: “[We] are called to represent the Savior.

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*Right: David Lindsley, Feed My Lambs. © by Intellectual Reserve, Inc.*



## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

[Our] voice to testify becomes the same as His voice, [our] hands to lift the same as His hands. His work is to bless His Father's spirit children with the opportunity to choose eternal life. So, [our] calling is to bless lives."<sup>36</sup> Whether we have a specific calling or not, we can do that. We can be His disciples. We just need to do as the children's song suggests, "Try to be like him, try, try, try."<sup>37</sup> For the crowning characteristic of our love of Him is our loyalty to Him.<sup>38</sup>

I testify that He lives, that He is very near, and that as you and I take what we learn as we serve in callings and continue that service—even after we are seemingly "released"—He will be with us, He will enable us, He will magnify us as His disciples. I also testify that when we fall or feel broken in any way, He will "run to us." He will heal us! He will lift us up!

I am humbled and overwhelmed at the love Jesus offers us, and I testify of His matchless love, which we feel today and can feel always. Love, His pure love, is the power that will change the world!

I marvel that he would descend from his throne  
divine  
To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine,  
That he should extend his great love unto such as I,  
Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify. . . .  
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me.<sup>39</sup>

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.



## “I STAND ALL AMAZED”

### NOTES

1. Charles H. Gabriel, “I Stand All Amazed,” *Hymns* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985), no. 193; emphasis added.
2. Gabriel, “I Stand All Amazed.”
3. See Jeffrey R. Holland, “I Stand All Amazed,” *Ensign*, August 1986, 68–73.
4. Isaiah 6:8.
5. Moroni 7:47; 8:17.
6. See “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles,” *Ensign*, April 2000, 2–3.
7. See “The Living Christ.”
8. John 10:30.
9. John 8:29.
10. John 3:16.
11. Samuel Medley, “I Know That My Redeemer Lives,” *Hymns*, no. 136.
12. Matthew 11:28–30.
13. Gabriel, “I Stand All Amazed.”
14. D&C 121:1–2.
15. D&C 121:7–8.
16. Richard G. Scott, “Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 17.
17. D&C 122:8.
18. D&C 122:9.
19. 2 Nephi 31:20.
20. 2 Nephi 2:8.
21. D&C 122:9.
22. D&C 84:88.
23. See Alma 7:11.

## OUR SAVIOR'S LOVE

24. Ted L. Gibbons, *LDS Living*, lesson 28, "Oh God, Where Art Thou?"

25. See Neal A. Maxwell, "In Him All Things Hold Together," *Brigham Young University Speeches* (Provo, UT: University Publications), 103–12.

26. Heidi S. Swinton, *To the Rescue: The Biography of Thomas S. Monson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2010), 135.

27. Henry B. Eyring, "In the Strength of the Lord," *Ensign*, May 2004, 19.

28. John 21:15–17.

29. John 21:3.

30. John 21:6.

31. Luke 5:6.

32. John 21:6.

33. John 21:7.

34. See John 21:17.

35. Jeffrey R. Holland, "The First Great Commandment," *Ensign*, November 2012, 84.

36. Henry B. Eyring, "Rise to Your Call," *Ensign*, November 2002, 76.

37. James R. Murray, "Jesus Once Was a Little Child," *Children's Songbook* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995), 55.

38. See Jeffrey R. Holland, "The First Great Commandment," *Ensign*, November 2012, 83–85.

39. Gabriel, "I Stand All Amazed."