

TO THE ONE

ELDER
BOYD K. PACKER

THE CHURCH OF
JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



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What I say in this presentation will be serious and solemn. I will not speak to everyone. I ask the indulgence of the “ninety and nine,” while I speak to “the one.” I ask you, the ninety and nine, to sit quietly if you will, reverently if you can, and to generously help create an atmosphere where we can reach that one who desperately needs the counsel that I will present. The cooperation of you of the ninety and nine may not, after all, prove to be without some benefit to you. There may be a time in the years ahead when you can use something of what I say to help someone else, perhaps someone very close to you.

I have worried for fear that any treatment of the subject I approach may be indelicate or immodest. I feel perhaps as did Jacob, the Book of Mormon prophet, when he opened a sermon with these words:

...It grieveth me that I must use so much boldness of speech concerning you, before your wives and your children, many of whose feelings are exceedingly tender and chaste and delicate before God, which thing is pleasing unto God;...

But, notwithstanding the greatness of the task, I must do according to the strict commands of God, and tell you concerning your wickedness and abominations, in the presence of the pure in heart, and the broken heart, and under the glance of the piercing eye of the Almighty God. (Jacob 2:7,10)

I understand those words of Jacob as I never have

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before. I see before me the worthy youth of Zion. I must nevertheless touch upon a subject such as he did, and for the same reason.

One more sentence from Jacob: “Wherefore I, Jacob, gave unto them these words as I taught them in the temple, *having first obtained mine errand from the Lord*” (Jacob 1:17; italics added). Rest assured that I have wrestled in prayer over this assignment.

And so, now to the subject. To introduce it I must use a word. I will use it one time only. Please notice that I use it as an adjective, not as a noun; I reject it as a noun. I speak to those few, those very few, who may be subject to homosexual temptation. I repeat, I accept that word as an adjective to describe a temporary condition. I reject it as a noun naming a permanent one.

I have had on my mind three general questions concerning this subject. First: Is sexual perversion wrong?

There appears to be a consensus in the world that it is natural, to one degree or another, for a percentage of the population. Therefore, we must accept it as all right. However, when you put a moral instrument on it, the needle immediately flips to the side labeled “wrong.” It may even register “dangerous.” If there has been heavy indulgence, it registers clear over to “spiritually destructive.”

The answer: It is not all right. It is wrong! It is not desirable; it is unnatural; it is abnormal; it is an affliction. When practiced, it is immoral. It is a transgression.

There is much in the scriptures that applies to this subject indirectly as well as a number of very direct references. In all of them, this and every other form of moral mischief is condemned. I read but two. This, from Romans, chapter one:

For this cause God gave them up unto *vile* affections: for even their women did *change* the *natural* use into that which is *against nature*:

And likewise also the men, leaving the *natural* use of the woman, burned in their *lust* one toward another; men with men working that which is *unseemly*, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their *error* which was meet. (Romans 1:26–27; italics added)

The Book of Mormon states: “And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil...” (2 Nephi 2:5). Even one who is spiritually immature ought intuitively to sense that such actions are wrong, very wrong.

There is a reason why we in the Church do not talk more openly about this subject. Some matters are best handled very privately. With many things, it is easy—very easy—to cause the very things we are trying to avoid. On one occasion, with a friend of mine, I went to the medical center of a large university to see another friend who was a doctor there. In the waiting room before us was a low table covered with pamphlets describing various diseases. My friend observed: “Well, there they are. Read enough about it and you’ll think you’ve got it.”

Do not be misled by those who whisper that it is part of your nature and therefore right for you. That is false doctrine!

The second question: Is this tendency impossible to change? Is it preset at the time of birth and locked in? Do you just have to live with it? For example, the shutter of an expensive camera is calibrated at the factory and cannot be adjusted in the field. If such a camera, by chance, is thrown out of calibration or damaged, it cannot be fixed locally. It must eventually go back to the factory, for only there can it be put in order. Is perversion like that? The answer is a conclusive *no!* It is not like that.

Some so-called experts, and many of those who have yielded to the practice, teach that it is congenital and incurable and that one just has to learn to live with it. They can point to a history of very little success in trying to put whatever mechanism that causes this back into proper adjustment. They have, to support them, some very convincing evidence. Much of the so-called scientific literature concludes that there really is not much that can be done about it.

I reject that conclusion out of hand. And there is a very sensible reason. How can a conclusion on a matter like this be valid when the studies have ignored the part of our nature most affected by it? It has not been fully studied as a moral and a spiritual disorder.

It is not unchangeable. It is not locked in. One does not just have to yield to it and live with it. Test it

against moral law and you learn something very quickly. If a condition that draws both men and women into one of the ugliest and most debased of all physical performances is set and cannot be overcome, it would be a glaring exception to all moral law. If that were so (and it is not), it would stand out as a strange and peculiar exception, one that can be applied to none other of the kinds of mischief that relate to the power of procreation. Such a thing is totally inconsistent.

The Lord does not work by exceptions. He works by rules. Put a moral or a spiritual test upon it and the needle flips conclusively to the indicator that says "correctable." Almost every major physical disease was once thought to be incurable but yields now that the cause is fully known and the right combination of remedies is applied.

Now, back to the illustration of the camera. There is a reason why there has been so little success in putting this mechanism back into proper adjustment—we keep using the wrong manual of instruction. For the most part, experts refer to the pages written by those who are assigned to do corrective work, rather than to the instruction provided by the Maker who created us.

When we understand fundamental moral law better than we do, we will be able to correct this condition routinely. The solution to this problem rests with the "thou shalt" and the "thou shalt not."

If someone is heavily involved in perversion, it becomes very important to him to believe that it is incurable. Can you not see that those who preach that doctrine do so to justify themselves? Some who become

tangled up in this disorder become predators. They proselyte the young or the inexperienced. It becomes very important for them to believe that everyone, to one degree or another, is "that way." You hear them claiming that a large percentage of the population is involved, in one way or another, with this activity. Do not be deceived. If you are one of the few who are subject to this temptation, do not be misled into believing that you are a captive to it. That is false doctrine!

The third question is a very logical extension of the other two: If it is wrong, and if it is not incurable, how can it be corrected? What can be done for someone who has had a few thoughts in this direction? Or for one who has experienced a long and ugly history of indulgence? How can they be helped?

First, understand that the power of procreation is good! It is the power to create life. Think of that! The power to generate life given to man! Through its employment a couple can unselfishly bring children into the world. This power becomes a binding tie in marriage. Those who employ this power in complete worthiness have the promise of eternal increase. Those who do not, face the possibility that it will be withdrawn from them.

In marriage a couple can unselfishly express their love to one another. They reap, as a result, a fulfillment and a completeness and a knowledge of their identity

as sons and daughters of God.

The power of procreation is good—divinely good—and productive. Pervert it, and it can be bad—devilishly bad—and destructive.

This power is very different from our physical or emotional nature. We cannot toy with it, or employ it prematurely or unwisely, without being on some very dangerous ground.

Now it is not all that unusual for a boy or a girl, in a moment of childish play with someone of the same gender, to enter into some mischief that should remain essentially innocent and meaningless and should be forgotten. And two young men or two young women, motivated by some attraction or responding to a desire for affection—any kind of affection—sometimes are drawn almost innocently into unnatural behavior. They can be drawn into some circumstance that makes them, for the moment, doubt their identity. Do not be deluded into thinking that such thoughts and feelings are normal for you. Just because you experience some period of confusion, do not make of that thing something that it is not. Do not order your life to conform to a transient thought or experience.

And just because someone has stubbed his toe a bit, or just because someone did not watch carefully where he was going and got off the track into some unnatural behavior, or just because he may have fallen victim to some clever predator, that is no reason to jump off the cliff into spiritual oblivion.

It is normal for a male to want to become more masculine, or for a female to want to become more

feminine. But one cannot increase masculinity or femininity by deviate physical contact with one of his own gender. There are many variations of this disorder, some of them very difficult to identify and all of them difficult to understand. When one projects himself in some confused role-playing way with those of the same gender in an effort to become more masculine or more feminine, something flips over and precisely the opposite results. In a strange way, this amounts to trying to love yourself.

A male, in his feelings and emotions, can become less masculine and more feminine and confused. A female can become, in her emotions, less feminine and more masculine and confused. Because the body cannot change, the emotional part may struggle to transform itself into the opposite gender. Then an individual is on a hopeless, futile quest for identity where it can never be achieved.

There is even an extreme condition in which some individuals, in a futile search, will undergo so-called "change" operations in an effort to restructure their identity and become whole. Do not ever even consider that. That is no answer at all! That has eternal, permanent consequences. If an individual becomes trapped somewhere between masculinity and femininity, he can be captive of the adversary and under the threat of losing his potential godhood. And so we are brought once again to the doctrine of agency, which is fundamental to the very purpose of our coming into mortality.

If an individual tries to receive comfort, satisfaction, affection, or fulfillment from deviate physical interaction with someone of his own gender, it can become an addiction! At first it may fill a need and give comfort of some kind, but, when that has faded, feelings of guilt and depression follow. A greater need soon emerges. A cycle begins which sets that individual on a long, sad, destructive skid into emotional and physical disintegration, and ultimately spiritual oblivion.

For centuries men have sought to find the cause of this condition. This is an essential step in developing a cure. Perversion may have some very physical expressions, but it is not a physical disorder. A most extensive physical examination will not reveal one shred of evidence that it is. Physicians have never located any tangible control center in the body that can be adjusted by medical or surgical means to change this condition. The next obvious place to look is the emotional or psychological part of our nature. Here we come closer.

Psychologists and psychiatrists have struggled for generations to find the cause. Many have searched with resolute dedication and have studied everything that might have a bearing on it—parent-child relationships, inherited tendencies, environmental influences, and a hundred and one other things. These things and many, many more remain on the scope. They either have some important effect *on* this problem, or they are affected in important ways *by* this problem.

Counselors somehow seem always to be working on the symptoms. When they find something that works

on one case and apply it to another, it may not work at all. They have not, as yet, found a remedy. This condition cannot as yet be uniformly corrected by emotional or physical or psychological or psychiatric treatment. Depending on the severity, some forms of these treatments are of substantial help in about 25 percent of the cases. And anything that does help, does help. But there must be a better answer.

Since perversion can have such an effect on the physical and on the emotional, it has been thought to be centered there. But where do we turn when the physical and the emotional treatments are only partly successful? To Latter-day Saints the answer ought to be obvious. We turn to the spiritual nature. The world may not regard that as important, but we do! When this is regarded as a moral matter and as a spiritual matter, there are answers not otherwise available.

The cause of this disorder has remained hidden for so long because we have been looking for it in the wrong place. When the cause is discovered, it may be nothing so mysterious after all. It may be hidden because it is so obvious.

I present a possibility. And I remind you—I am talking to the one. You, the ninety and nine, are merely listening in. I am conscious that when I mention it, the first reaction may be resistance, resentment, even hostility—that is to be expected—but hear me out!

Have you explored the possibility that the cause, when found, will turn out to be a very typical form of selfishness—selfishness in a very subtle form? Now—and understand this—I do not think for a minute that

the form of selfishness at the root of perversion is a conscious one, at least not to begin with. I am sure it is quite the opposite. Selfishness can attach itself to an individual without his being aware that he is afflicted with it. It can become imbedded so deeply and disguised so artfully as to be almost indistinguishable.

It is hard to believe that any individual would, by a clear, conscious decision or by a pattern of them, choose a course of deviation. It is much more subtle than that. If one could even experiment with the possibility that selfishness of a very subtle nature may be the cause of this disorder, that quickly clarifies many things. It opens the possibility of putting some very sick things in order.

The spiritual perspective for the cure of perversion emerges with the realization that the physical power of creation or procreation is different from every other part of our nature. It is so devised that the only employment of it calculated to bring happiness is in giving, not in receiving. Consider this: *One cannot procreate alone.* And this: *One cannot procreate with his own gender.* These are absolutes. And there is a third: *One cannot procreate without yielding or giving.*

When one has the humility to admit that a spiritual disorder is tied to perversion and that selfishness rests at the root of it, already the way is open to the treatment of the condition. It is a painful admission indeed that selfishness may be at the root of it, but we do not have much evidence that one can cure perversion by trying to cure perversion. If unselfishness can effect a cure, we ought to be desperate enough by now at least

to experiment with the possibility. I repeat, we have had very little success in trying to remedy perversion by treating perversion. It is very possible to cure it by treating selfishness.

Some individuals, entangled in perversion, make a clear-cut decision to come out in the open, to stay that way, and to plunge further into it. That becomes a clear-cut act of selfishness. There is an inevitable result. From it we learn something important. Any individual is, of course, free to do that because each has his agency, but he cannot do that and produce any happiness for those who love him nor, ultimately, for himself.

There are bonds of love that tie human beings together. How sad when signals of love are sent across this network of communication from one human being to another and there comes back in return static, rejection, heartbreak, and agony! That kind of signal generates very quickly from selfishness. That is a selfish signal.

Individuals guilty of very selfish acts inevitably hurt those around them. No person ever made a conscious decision to make unnatural behavior his life-style without sending brutal, destructive, selfish signals to those who love him.

If you cannot understand perversion—and I admit that I cannot understand it—you can understand unselfishness and selfishness. And you can learn to cure perversion.

Now, before we go any further, let me point out that anything can be perverted—even unselfishness. So don't come up with some rationalization that participation in an act of sexual deviation is a generous and an unselfish gesture. Don't claim that it is an unselfish thing to relieve the craving of someone who is similarly afflicted. Any thinking soul ought to know better than that. And don't argue that in natural relationships, even in marriage, there can be complete and brutal selfishness. That may be true, but that is not our subject. And in any case, that is no justification for any immoral or selfish act of any kind.

The admission that one may suffer from selfishness cuts to the very quick. That is how deep the cut must be to repair many physical disorders. And yet our hospitals are full to overflowing with patients. They count it quite worthwhile to submit to treatment, however painful. They struggle through long periods of recuperation and sometimes must be content with a limited life-style thereafter, in some cases in order just to live. Is it not reasonable that recuperation from this disorder might be somewhat comparable? If unselfishness can cure it—if it has to be applied for a long period of time, and thereafter continually—is it not worth it?

We can do many things that are very personal, but these need not be selfish. For instance, it need not be a selfish thing to study and improve your mind, to develop your talents, or to perfect the physical body. These can be very unselfish if the motive is ultimately to bless others. But there is something different about

the power of procreation. There is something that has never been fully explained that makes it dangerous indeed to regard it as something given to us, for us.

Now I hope I will not disappoint you too much if I say at once that I do not know of any quick spiritual cure-all. Setting aside miracles for the moment, in which I firmly believe, generally I do not know of some spiritual shock treatment that will sear the soul of an individual and instantly kill this kind of temptation—or any other kind, for that matter. No spiritual wonder drug that I know of will do it. The cure rests in following for a long period of time, and thereafter continually, some very basic, simple rules for moral and spiritual health. A lesson from the prophet Elisha is in order here.

Naaman was the general of the Syrian army. “He was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.” There was in his house a slave girl from Israel. She told of prophets in Israel who “would recover him of his leprosy.” The king of Syria, wanting to save his valued general, sent a letter to the king of Israel saying that he had sent Naaman, “that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.”

The king of Israel was frightened and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” Elisha heard of the letter and told the king, “Let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.” When Naaman arrived, Elisha sent a messenger to him

saying, “Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.”

At this Naaman was furious. He thought he would at least come out and “call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.” And the Bible records that Naaman “went away in a rage.”

But then his servant (it seems that, always, there has to be a servant) “came near, and spake unto him, and said, . . . If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?” Naaman stood rebuked by his humble servant, and the incident concludes in these words: “Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.” (See 2 Kings 5:1-14.)

If I could announce to you some dramatic, even bizarre, cure for this condition, I am sure many would move without hesitation to accept it, but when we talk of little things, most, I fear, will receive it just as Naaman first received the message from the prophet Elisha. If I should tell you to do some great thing and you would be cured, would you not do it? How much better, then, for you to do the little things! Then *your* flesh can become again as a little child, and you will be clean. Think very seriously on that.

You must learn this: Overcoming moral temptation

is a very private battle, an internal battle. There are many around you who want to help and who can help—parents, branch president, bishop, for a few a marriage partner. And after that, if necessary, there are counselors and professionals to help you. But do not start with them. Others can lend moral support and help establish an environment for your protection. But this is an individual battle.

Establish a resolute conviction that you will resist for a lifetime, if necessary, any deviate thought or deviate action. Do not respond to those feelings; suppress them. Suppression is not a very popular word with many psychologists. Look what happened to society when it became unpopular!

You have a God-given right to be free and to choose. Refuse the unnatural; choose the moral way. You will know, then, where you are going. Ahead is but the struggle to get there.

Do not try merely to *discard* a bad habit or a bad thought. *Replace* it. When you try to eliminate a bad habit, if the spot where it used to be is left open it will sneak back and crawl again into that empty space. It grew there; it will struggle to stay there. When you discard it, fill up the spot where it was. Replace it with something good. Replace it with unselfish thoughts, with unselfish acts. Then, if an evil habit or addiction tries to return, it will have to fight for attention. Sometimes it may win. Bad thoughts often have to be evicted a hundred times, or a thousand. But if they have to be evicted ten thousand times, never surrender to them. You are in charge of you. I repeat, it is very, very diffi-

cult to eliminate a bad habit just by trying to discard it. Replace it. Read in Matthew, chapter 12, verses 43 to 45, the parable of the empty house. There is a message in it for you.

Now to you, the one, some very direct counsel. If you are subject to this kind of temptation, it is essential that you break all connections with those who for one reason or another encourage it. Do not go back to places where you were tempted. Do not frequent those places where people with like attractions gather. This may require an adjustment socially, occupationally, even geographically.

If you are involved in a liaison, no matter how innocent it may appear, break it up right now. Some things tie you to this kind of temptation. Quit them. Avoid the very appearance of evil. This may be very painful if you are entangled in a relationship with deep emotional ties. Cut those ties and encourage the other person to do likewise. Get it done soon, and get it done completely and finally.

Freedom from this kind of enslavement is up a trail that an individual must walk alone. If you stumble, get up and move on. Soon your bruises will heal. You will grow stronger. Your battle is two-thirds won, or three-fourths or four-fifths won, when you take charge of your identity.

Accept yourself as belonging in the tabernacle that God has provided for you. Your body was provided as an instrument of your mind. It has the purpose to bless others. Don't be mixed up in this twisted kind of self-love.

With physical ailments we always want a quick cure. If a prescription hasn't worked by sundown, we want to get another one. For this ailment there is no other prescription that I know about. You will have to grow away from your problem with undeviating—notice that word—*undeviating* determination. The longer you have been afflicted, or the more deeply you have been involved, the more difficult and the longer the cure. Any relapse is a setback. But if this should happen, refuse to be discouraged. Take your medicine, however bitter it tastes.

There is great power in the scriptures. Study the gospel—live it. Read the revelations. Every prescription against selfishness of any kind will bring some control of this disease. Every routine of unselfishness will give you more strength.

Look forward to being well and clean and happy. Even if you are guilty, there is no life sentence imposed or pronounced upon you. Keep that in mind.

Now I want to express my gratitude to you of the ninety and nine who have listened patiently, I think even intently, to a message that has been directed, primarily, at the one. I think your time may not have been misspent. The principles that we have talked about apply to any moral temptation, and you may likewise have been reinforced and forewarned.

I want to tell you, all of you, pointedly that I have thought this to be a very personal message. No good purpose will be served if you make this message the

subject of chatter in the dormitories, or in classes, or in Church meetings. I repeat, I have thought this to be a very personal message, and I have already said that we can very foolishly cause things we are trying to prevent by talking too much about them.

Now, what I have to say on this subject, I have said. And that is all I would say to you if you wrote to me, or if you came to see me personally. I am not the one to treat you. *You* are the one to treat you. If you are worried about this problem, if you need help, it should come first from your parents, then from your branch president or bishop or from others that he may enlist to assist you. But you yourself can call upon a power that can renew your body. You yourself can draw upon a power that will reinforce your will. If you have this temptation—fight it!

Oh, if I could only convince you that you are a son or a daughter of Almighty God! You have a righteous, spiritual power—an inheritance that you have hardly touched. You have an Elder Brother who is your Advocate, your Strength, your Protector, your Mediator, your Physician. Of Him I bear witness. The Lord loves you! You are a child of God. Face the sunlight of truth. The shadows of discouragement, of disappointment, of deviation will be cast behind you.

I came into the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to fill the vacancy when Joseph Fielding Smith became

the President of the Church. He was a good and a great man, a prophet. He wrote these words with which I conclude, speaking to you, the one.

Does the journey seem long,
The path rugged and steep?
Are there briars and thorns on the way?
Do sharp stones cut your feet
As you struggle to rise
To the heights through the heat of the day?
Is your heart faint and sad,
Your soul weary within,
As you toil 'neath your burden of care?
Does the load heavy seem
You are forced now to lift?
Is there no one your burden to share?
Are you weighed down with grief,
Is there pain in your breast,
As you wearily journey along?
Are you looking behind
To the valley below?
Do you wish you were back in the throng?
Let your heart be not faint
Now the journey's begun;
There is One who still beckons to you.
Look upward in gladness
And take hold of his hand,
He will lead you to heights that are new,

A land holy and pure
Where all trouble doth end,
And your life shall be free from all sin,
Where no tears shall be shed
For no sorrows remain;
Take his hand and with him enter in.
(*Hymns*, no. 245)

God bless you, the one. You are loved of Him and of His servants. I bear witness that God lives, and that great, healing, cleansing power is extended now to you. And that great power is set against that intruding power of perversion which now raises its head in society. Come away from it, and one day you will be in His presence. He will welcome you with outstretched arms, and you and He will weep for joy over the one who has returned. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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