

“Return unto Me ... That I May Heal You”

By Elder S. Mark Palmer
Of the Presidency of the Seventy

« E fāriu mai iā'u [...] 'ia fa'aorahia 'outou e au ra »

Nā Elder S. Mark Palmer
Nō te peresidenira'a nō te Hitu 'Ahuru

April 2025 general conference

*There is rejoicing in heaven over those who return.
It is not too late for you to come back.*

We once lived in a home surrounded by majestic trees. Next to the entrance was a beautiful willow tree. One sad night a mighty storm blew, and the willow came crashing down. It lay on the ground with its roots pulled out and was a sorry sight.

I was ready to rev up the chainsaw and cut the tree up for firewood when our neighbour came running out to stop me. He chastised me for giving up on the tree, and he emphatically urged us not to get rid of it. He then pointed to one root still in the ground and said that if we propped the tree up, cut off its branches, and nourished it, the roots would take hold once again.

I was sceptical and doubted how a tree so obviously fallen and in trouble could possibly survive and come back to life. I reasoned that even if it did begin growing again, it would surely not survive the next storm. But knowing our neighbour believed the tree still had a future, we went along with the plan.

And the result? After some time, we saw signs of life as the tree began to take root. Now, 12 years later, the tree is vibrant and full of life, with strong roots, and once again contributing to the beauty of the landscape.

While I meet Saints around the world, I am reminded of this willow tree and how there is

*Tē vai nei te 'oāoa i te ra'i nō te feiā e ho'i mai nei.
'Aita i taere roa nō 'outou 'ia ho'i mai.*

I te hōē tau 'ua ora na mātou i roto i te hōē fare tei hā'atihia e te mau tumu rā'au teitei. I pīha'i iho i te vāhi tomora'a tē vai rā te hōē tumu rā'au ārope (Saule). I te hōē pō pe'ape'a, 'ua puhi mai te hōē vero pūai 'e 'ua mā'iri te tumu ārope. 'Ua tārava noa 'oia i ni'a i te repo, 'ua hutihia mai te mau a'a, e hi'ora'a pe'ape'a mau.

'Ua ineine au nō te fa'āhipa i te mātini tāpū rā'au 'e 'ia tāpūpū i te tumu rā'au 'ei rā'au tahu auahi, 'a horo mai ai tō mātou hoa tāpiri mai i tō mātou fare nō te tāpe'a iā'u. 'Ua fa'ahapa 'oia iā'u i te fa'aru'era'a i te tumu rā'au 'e 'ua fa'aitoitō 'ū'ana mai 'oia ia mātou 'eiaha e tāpūpū. 'Ua fa'atoro mai 'oia i muri iho i te hōē a'a e vai fa'ahou ra i roto i te repo 'e 'ua parau ē. mai te mea e turu tātou i te tumu rā'au, e tāpūpū i tōna mau 'āma'a 'e 'atu'atu maita'i iāna, e tupu fa'ahou mai te mau a'a.

'Ua tapitapi ri'i tō'u mana'o 'e te fē'a'a ē nāhea te hōē tumu rā'au e mea pāpū 'ua topa 'e tē fifi nei 'ia ora mai 'e 'ia ho'i fa'ahou mai i te ora. 'Ua feruri vau iho ē, noa atu pa'i e tupu fa'ahou mai te reira, e mea pāpū e'ita 'oia e ora mai i te vero nō muri iho. Terā rā ma te 'itera'a 'ua ti'aturi tō mātou ho'a tāpiri mai ē e orara'a fa'ahou tō te tumu rā'au i muri mai, 'ua rave mātou i tāna fa'anahora'a.

'E te hope'ara'a ? I muri mai mā'a taime, 'ua 'ite atu mātou i te mau tāpa'o nō te ora : 'ua ha'amata te tumu rā'au i te a'ahia. I teienei, 12 matahiti i muri mai, 'ua ruperupe rahi roa te tumu rā'au, ma te mau 'a'a pūai 'e 'ua hōro'a fa'ahou mai i te nehenehe o te fenua.

'A fārerei ai au i te feiā mo'a nā te ao ato'a nei, tē ha'amana'o nei au i teie tumu ārope 'e mea

hope even when all seems lost. Some once had testimonies of the gospel that were strong and vibrant like the willow. Then, for uniquely personal reasons, those testimonies became weakened, leading to a loss of faith. Others hang on with the slimmest of roots tapping into gospel soil.

Yet again and again, I am inspired by the stories of so many who have chosen to renew their discipleship and come back to their Church home. Rather than discarding their faith and belief like worthless firewood, instead they have responded to spiritual promptings and loving invitations to return.

I attended a stake conference in Korea where a returning member shared: “I thank the brothers for their willingness to accept my lack of faith and my weakness, for reaching out to me, and for the members who are always so kind to me. I still have a lot of friends around me who are less active. It’s funny, but they tell each other to go back to the Church to get their faith back. I think maybe they are all longing for faith.”

To all who are longing for faith, we invite you to come back. I promise your faith can be strengthened as you once again worship with the Saints.

A former missionary from Africa wrote a senior Church leader, apologising and seeking forgiveness for being offended by his teachings about a certain cultural tradition, which then led him to leave the Church. He humbly expressed: “Sadly, the fact that I took offense 15 years ago has made me pay an extremely heavy price. I lost so much—much more than I ever imagined. I am deeply embarrassed by the harm I may have caused along the way, but above all else I am pleased that I have found my way back.”

To all who recognise what you have lost, we invite you to come back so you can once again taste the joyous fruit of the gospel.

A sister in the United States was gone from the Church for many years. Her story of coming back includes powerful lessons for parents and

nāhea te tīa’irā’a e vai noa ai, e au ra ’ua mo’e te mau mea ato’a. E ’itera’a pāpū nō te ’evanelia tō vetahi i nā mua a’enei e mea pūai ’e te ruperupe mai tō te ārope. I muri iho, nō te mau tumu tā’a ’ē o te tāata iho, ’ua ha’aparuparu teie mau ’itera’a pāpū, tei arata’i atu i te mo’era’a o te fa’aro’o. Vetahi e tāpe’a rī’i ra, ma te tāipura’a i roto i te repo o te ’evanelia.

Fa’ahou ’ē fa’ahou ā, ’ua fa’auruhia vau e te mau ’āamu nō e rave rahi tāata tei mā’iti ’ia fa’āpī i tō rātou tī’arā’a pipi ’e ’ua ho’i mai i tō rātou fare, te ’Ēkālesia. O’i i te fa’aru’era’a i tō rātou fa’aro’o ’ē tō rātou ti’aturira’a mai te vahie faufa’a ’ore, ’ua pāhono mai rātou i te muhuhura’a pae vārua ’ē te mau anira’a o te here ’ia ho’i mai.

’Ua haere atu vau i te hōē ’āmuira’a titi i Korea, i reira te hōē melo tei ho’i mai ’a fa’a’ite ai : « Tē ha’amāuruuru nei au i te mau taeae nō tō rātou hina’aro ’ia fa’ari’i i tō’u ’erera’a i te fa’aro’o ’ē tō’u paruparu, i te torora’a mai i te rima iā’u, ’ē nō te mau melo tei hāmani maita’i noa iā’u. Tē vai fa’ahou rā tō’u mau hoa ’ati a’e iā’u e ’ere i te mea itoitō roa. E mea ’ārearea, tē parau nei rātou i te tahi ’ē te tahi ’ia ho’i mai i te ’Ēkālesia nō te ’ite fa’ahou mai i tō rātou fa’aro’o. Tē mana’o nei au ē rātou pā’to’atē hina’aro nei i te fa’aro’o».

I te feiā ato’a ē hina’aro nei i te fa’aro’o, tē ani manihini atu nei mātou ia ’outou ’ia ho’i mai. Tē parau fafau atu nei au ē, e nehenehe tō ’outou fa’aro’o e ha’apūaihia ’a ha’amori fa’ahou mai ai ’outou ’ē te feiā mo’a.

’Ua pāpā’i te hōē misiōnare tahito nō ’Āfirita mai i te hōē tī’a fa’atere pa’ari o te ’Ēkālesia, nō te tātarahapa ’ē nō te tītau i te fa’āorera’a hara i te vairā’a te ’ino’ino i tāna mau ha’apī’ira’a nō ni’a te tahi peu tumu, ’ō tei tūra’i iāna ’ia fa’aru’e i te ’Ēkālesia. ’Ua fa’a’ite ’oia ma te haeha’a : « Te mea ’oto rā, nō tō’u vai ’ino’inora’a e 15 matahiti, ’ua fa’aaufau iā’u i te hōē ho’o teiaha mau. E mea rahi mau tā’u i ’ere—hau atu i tā’u e ’ore e nehenehe e feruri. Tē ha’amā hōhonu nei au i te māuiui tā’u i fa’atupu i te roara’a o te ’ē’a, terā rā nā ni’a i te mau mea ato’a, tē ’oā’oā nei au i te ’itera’a mai i tō’u ’ē’a o te ho’ira’a mai ».

Nō te feiā ato’a tei ’ite i te mea tā rātou i ’ere, tē ani manihini atu nei mātou ia ’outou ’ia ho’i mai, ’ia tāmata fa’ahou i te mau hotu ’oā’oā o te ’evanelia.

Hōē tuahine i te fenua Marite tei fa’aru’e i te ’Ēkālesia e rave rahi matahiti. I roto i tōna ’āamu nō te ho’ira’a mai, ’ua faufa’ahia e te mau

family members who anguish over loved ones who step away. She wrote:

“I could list a myriad of reasons for why I walked away from the Church, the gospel, and in a way, my family. But they really don’t matter. I didn’t make one big decision to leave the Church—I probably made a thousand choices. But one thing I have always known is that my parents did make one big decision, and they stuck to it. They decided to love me.

“I couldn’t possibly know how many tears have been shed, how many sleepless nights, nor how many heartfelt pleading words of prayer have been uttered on my behalf. They didn’t call me out on my sins; rather, they called out to me in my sinfulness. They didn’t make me feel unwelcome in their home and at family gatherings; any of those feelings were of my own doing. Instead, they continued to welcome me. They must have seen my light dim over time. But they knew that the person I was back then was just a shadow of who I was yet to become.

“Just as my path away from the Church was complex, so was my way back. But one thing that was not hard about coming back was the feeling of being back home where I belong.”

My message today is especially to all who once felt the Spirit but question whether there is a way back or a place for you in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. It is also for any who are barely hanging on or who are tempted to step away.

This message is not a challenge, and it is not a condemnation. It is an invitation, extended with love and a sincere desire to welcome you back to your spiritual home.

I have prayed that you will feel the witness of the Holy Ghost as you now hear this loving invitation and magnificent promise from our Saviour, Jesus Christ:

“Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?”

Every week many are responding to the Saviour’s invitation by returning to discipleship and Church activity, quietly and humbly seeking

hā’api’ira’a pūai nō te mau metua ‘e nō te mau melo o te ‘utuāfare hepohepo nō te pohera’a te hōē tei herehia. ‘Ua pāpā’i ‘oia :

« E nehenehe vau e tāpura e rave rahi tumu vau nō te aha vau i fa’aru’e ai i te ‘Ēkālesia, te ‘evanelia, ‘e mai te huru ra tō’u ‘utuāfare. ‘Aita rā te reira i te mea faufā’a roa. ‘Aita vau i rave i te hōē fa’aotira’a rahi ‘ia fa’aru’e i te ‘Ēkālesia—’ua rave paha vau e tauasini mā’itira’a. Terā rā, hōē mea tā’u i ‘ite noa na, ‘oia ho’i ‘ua rave tō’u nā metua hōē noa fa’aotira’a rahi, ‘e ‘ua fa’aea noa rāua i nī’a i te reira. ‘Ua fa’aoti rāua ‘ia here iā’u.

« ‘Aita vau i ‘ite e hia rahira’a roimata tei tahe, e hia pō ‘aita i tāoto, ‘aita ato’a e hia rahira’a pure ‘āau tae ‘e te tāparura’a tei fa’ahitihia nō’u. ‘Aita rāua i tu’ufa’a’ite i tā’u mau hara ; ‘ua huti mai ra rāua iā’u i roto i tō’u huru tāata hara. ‘Aita rāua i fa’a’ite mai iā’u i tō rāua au ‘ore i tō rāua fare ‘aita ato’a i te mau rurura’a ‘utuāfare ; ‘aita vau i riro ‘ei tia’au nō teie mau nīno’a mana’o. Maoti rā, ‘ua tāmau noa rāua i te fa’ari’i mai iā’u. ‘Ua ti’a ia rāua ‘ia ‘ite i tō’u māmarama i te mohimohira’a i te roara’a o te tau. ‘Ua ‘ite rā rāua ē te tāata tā’u i riro na i mūta’a ra e ata noa ia nō te tāata tā’u e ti’a ‘ia riro mai.

« Mai tō’u ‘ē’a fifi nō te haere mai i rāpae i te ‘Ēkālesia, mai te reira ato’a nō tō’u ho’ira’a mai. Te hōē mea rā e ‘ere i te mea fifi i tō’u ho’ira’a mai, ‘o te nīno’a mana’o ia ‘ia ho’i mai iō’ū i te vāhi vau te rirora’a ».

Tā’u poro’i i teie mahana, nō te mau tāata ato’a ia tei putapū i te Vārua i te hōē taime, ‘e ‘o tē uiui nei tē vai rā ānei te hōē ‘ē’a ho’ira’a ‘aore rā te hōē vāhi nō rātou i roto i te ‘Ēkālesia a Iesu Mesia tei fa’aho’i-fa’ahou-hia mai. Teie poro’i nō rātou ato’a e fifi nei ‘ia tāpe’a māite ‘aore rā ‘o tē tāmata-hia nei ‘ia fa’aātea ‘ē atu.

E ‘ere teie poro’i i te hōē fa’ahēpora’a, ‘e e ‘ere ato’a i te hōē fa’ahapara’a. E anira’a ra teie, e fa’ataehia atu ma te here ‘e te hina’aro ‘āau tae, ‘ia fa’ari’i poupou fa’ahou ia ‘outou i roto i tō ‘outou fare pae vārua.

‘Ua pure au ‘ia putapū ‘outou i te ‘itera’a pāpū o te Vārua Maita’i ‘a fa’aro’o ai ‘outou i teie anira’a tei ‘i i te here ‘e teie parau fafau fa’ahiahia a tō tātou Fa’aora ‘o Iesu Mesia :

« Aita ānei ‘outou e fāriu mai iā’ui teienei, ‘e ia tātarahapa ho’i i tā ‘outou mau hara, ‘e ‘ia fa’afāriuhia mai, ‘ia fa’aorahia ‘outou e au ra ? »

I te mau hepetoma ato’a, e rave rahi ‘o rātou e pāhono nei i te anira’a a te Fa’aora ma te raverā’a i tō rātou ti’ara’a pipi, ma te mā’imira’a māmū ‘e

the healing that Jesus promises. And contrary to narratives which sometimes circulate, record numbers of our young people are choosing to stay strong and to grow their faith in Jesus Christ.

When some of Jesus's followers in Capernaum found His teachings hard and chose to leave, He turned to His Apostles and asked, "Will ye also go away?"

This is the question we each must answer as we face our individual times of testing. Peter's response to Jesus is timeless and resounding: "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

So as you consider the Saviour's invitation to return unto Him, what might you learn from the story of the willow tree?

The journey back is often not easy or comfortable, but it is worth it. When our willow was stood back up, all its branches were cut away. It was not pretty. We too may feel vulnerable as we discard old ways and are stripped of pride. Focusing your faith on Jesus Christ and His gospel—the trunk and the roots—will give you the hope and the courage to take that first step back.

It took many years for our willow to regain its former strength and beauty. Now it is even stronger and more beautiful than before. Be patient as your faith and testimony also grow. This includes not taking offense at thoughtless comments like "Where have you been all these years?"

The willow would never have survived without constant care and nourishment. You will nourish your faith and your testimony as you feast at the sacrament table each week and as you worship in the house of the Lord.

Just as the willow needed sunshine for its branches and leaves to grow again, so your testimony will grow as you stay sensitive to the feelings and the witness of the Spirit. Learn from Amulek, who described his time as a less-active

te ha'ēha'a i te fa'aorara'a tā Iesu i parau fafau mai. 'E 'ēiaha mai te mau nīno'a parau i te tahi taime e parare nei, te hōē nūmera rahi o tā tātou feiā 'āpī tei mā'iti 'ia vai pūai noa 'e 'ia fa'ananea i tō rātou fa'aro'o ia Iesu Mesia.

I te taime 'a 'ite ai te tahi mau pipi a Iesu i tāna mau ha'api'ira'a pa'ari i Kaperenaumi 'e 'ua fa'aoti e haere 'ē atu, 'ua fāriu aē ra 'oia i ni'a i tāna mau 'āpōsetolo 'e 'ua ui atu, « e haere ato'a ānei 'outou ? »

'O teie te uira'a e ti'a ia tātou tāta'itahi 'ia pāhono 'a fa'aruru ai tātou i tō tātou mau taime tāmatarā'a. E mea mure 'ore 'e te pīna'ina'i te pāhonora'a a Petero ia Iesu : « E haere ti'a mātou 'ia vai ra ? Tei ia 'oe ho'i te parau o te ora mure 'ore ra ».

Nō reira, ma te ferurira'a i te anira'a a te Fa'aora 'ia ho'i mai iāna ra, e aha tā 'outou e nehenehe e ha'api'i mai nā roto mai i teie 'āamu o te tumu rāau ārope ?

Pinepine e 'ere te 'ē'a ho'ira'a mai i te mea 'ōhie 'aore rā i te mea au maita'i, e mea ho'ona rā te reira. I te fa'ati'ara'ahia tā mātou tumu ārope i tōna vāhi, 'ua tāpūpūhia tōna mau 'āma'a. E 'ere te reira i te mea nehenehe. 'O tātou ato'a, e nehenehe tātou e putapū i te pāfurura'a 'ore, 'ia fa'aru'e ana'e tātou i tā tātou mau peu tahito 'e ma te 'iriti-ē-ra'a atu i tō tātou te'ote'o. Te fa'atumura'a i tō 'outou fa'aro'o i ni'a ia Iesu Mesia 'e i tāna 'evangelia—te tumu 'e te mau a'a—e hōro'a mai ia 'outou i te ti'a'ira'a 'e te itoito nō te rave i teie ta'ahira'a mātāmua 'ia ho'i mai.

'Ua tītauhia e rave rahi matahiti nō tā mātou tumu ārope 'ia 'ite fa'ahou mai i tōna pūai 'e tōna nehenehe nā mua aē. I teienei, e mea pūai atu ā 'oia 'e te nehenehe atu ā i nā mua aēnei. 'A fa'a'oroma'i 'a tupu rahi noa ai tō 'outou fa'aro'o 'e tō 'outou 'itera'a pāpū. Tei roto ato'a, 'ēiaha 'ia vai te mana'o 'ino'ino i roto ia 'outou i te mau parau māuiui mai teie, « i hea ho'i 'oe i terā rahira'a matahiti ? »

E'ita te ārope e ora mai 'aita ana'e i 'atu'atuhia 'e i fa'aamu-tāmau-hia. E ti'a ia 'outou e fa'aamu i tō 'outou fa'aro'o 'e tō 'outou 'itera'a pāpū, 'a tāmā'a ai 'outou i te 'aira'a mā'a o te 'ōro'a mo'a i te mau hepetoma ato'a 'e 'a ha'amori ai 'outou i roto i te fare o te Fatu.

Mai te tumu 'ārope tei hina'aro i te mahana nō tōna mau 'āma'a 'e tōna mau rau'ere 'ia tupu fa'ahou, e tupu rahi tō 'outou 'itera'a pāpū 'a vai hiā'oto ai 'outou i te mau nīno'a mana'o 'e i te 'itera'a o te Vārua. 'A ha'api'i mai nā roto mai ia

member by saying, “I was called many times and I would not hear.”

My neighbour knew what the willow could once again become. So too the Lord knows your divine potential and what your faith and your testimony can become. He will never give up on you. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all that is broken can be healed.

I witness that there is rejoicing in heaven over those who return. You are needed, and you are loved. I testify that Jesus Christ is our Saviour and that He blesses all who return unto Him with greater peace and with great joy. His arms of mercy are not folded but are open and extended to you. It is not too late for you to come back. With all the love in our hearts, we welcome you home. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Amuleka 'o tei fa'ata'a mai i tōna taime 'ei melo paruparu ma te parau ē, « i parauhia vau e rave rahi taime, 'e e 'ore roa vau e fa'aro'o ».

'Ua 'ite tō'u ta'ata tāpiri mai i tō'u fare i te mea tā te ārope e nehenehe e riro fa'ahou mai. Hōē ā ato'a, 'ua 'ite te Fatu i tō 'outou fāito pūai hana-hana 'e i te mea tā to 'outou fa'aro'o 'e tō 'outou 'itera'a pāpū e nehenehe e riro fa'ahou mai. E'ita roa 'oia e fa'aru'e ia 'outou. Nā roto i te tāra'hara a Iesu Mesia, e nehenehe te mau mea ato'a tei pararī e fa'aorahia.

Tē ha'apāpū atu nei au ē, tē vai ra te 'oa'oa i te ra'i nō te feiā e ho'i mai. E mea hina'arohia 'outou 'e 'ua herehia 'outou. Tē fa'a'ite pāpū nei au ē, 'o Iesu Mesia tō tātou Fa'aora 'e e fa'aora 'oia i te ta'ata ato'a 'o tē ho'i mai iāna ra ma te hōē hau rahi a'e 'e te 'oa'oa rahi a'e. 'Aita tōna nā rima aroha i tūfetuhia, e vai matara noa rā 'e tē toro nei ia 'outou na. 'Aita ā i taere roa nō 'outou nō te ho'i mai. Ma te here tā'ato'a o tō mātou 'ā'au, e fa'ari'i poupou mātou ia 'outou i te fare I te i'oa o Iesu Mesia, 'āmene.