

It is not difficult to withstand the mockings and unsavory remarks of foolish ones who would ridicule chastity, honesty, and obedience to God's commands. The world has ever belittled adherence to principle. Times change. Practices persist. When Noah was instructed to build an ark, the foolish populace looked at the cloudless sky, then scoffed and jeered—until the rain came.

In the Western Hemisphere, those long centuries ago, people doubted, disputed, and disobeyed until the fire consumed Zarahemla, the earth covered Moronihah, and water engulfed the land of Moroni. Jeering, mocking, ribaldry, and sin were no more. They had been replaced by sullen silence, dense darkness. The patience of God had expired, his timetable fulfilled.

Must we learn such costly lessons over and over again? When we fail to profit from the experiences of the past, we are doomed to repeat them with all their heartache, suffering, and anguish. Haven't we the wisdom to obey him who designed the plan of salvation—rather than that serpent who despised its beauty?

In the words of the poet, "Wouldst thou be gathered to Christ's chosen flock, shun the broad way too easily explored, And let thy path be hewn out of the rock, The living rock of God's eternal word." (William Wordsworth.)

Can we not follow the Prince of Peace, that pioneer who literally showed the way for others to follow? His divine plan can save us from the Babylons of sin, complacency, and error. His example points the way. When faced with temptation, he

shunned it. When offered the world, he declined it. When asked for his life, he gave it!

"Come, follow me," the Savior said, Then let us in his footsteps tread, For thus alone can we be one With God's own loved, begotten Son. "For thrones, dominions, kingdoms, powers, And glory great and bliss are ours If we, throughout eternity, Obey his words, 'Come, follow me.'" (Hymns, 14.)

Now is the time. This is the place. May we follow him, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Thomas S. Monson of the Council of the Twelve Apostles.

The Tabernacle Choir will now sing: "On Great Lone Hills," and then the men of the Choir will sing, "The Lord Bless You and Keep You," following which there will be a brief organ interlude, and Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

Singing by Choir: "On Lonely Hills."

Singing by men of the Choir: "The Lord Bless You and Keep You."

President N. Eldon Tanner

Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve will be our concluding speaker.

Elder Ezra Taft Benson

Of the Council of the Twelve

My beloved brothers and sisters—all children of the same Father, in the spirit: Humbly and gratefully I address you, with a prayer that what I say will be pleasing to the Lord.

**Two thousand years ago:
a perfect man**

Nearly two thousand years ago a

perfect man walked the earth: Jesus the Christ. He was the son of a heavenly father and an earthly mother. He is the God of this world, under the Father. He taught men truth, that they might be free. His example and precepts provide the great standard, the only sure way, for all mankind. He became the first and only one who had

the power to reunite his body with his spirit after death. By his power all men who have died shall be resurrected. Before him one day we all must stand to be judged by his laws. He lives today and in the not too distant future shall return, in triumph, to subdue his enemies, to reward men according to their deeds, and to assume his rightful role to rule and reign in righteousness over the entire earth.

Two hundred years ago, inspired men

Nearly two hundred years ago, some inspired men walked this land of America—not perfect men, but men raised up by the Perfect Man to perform a great work. Foreordained were they, to lay the foundation of this republic, the Lord's base of operations in these latter days. Blessed by the Almighty in their struggle for liberty and independence, the power of heaven rested on these founders as they drafted that great document for governing men, the Constitution of the United States. Like the Ten Commandments, the truths on which the Constitution was based were timeless; and also, as with the Decalogue, the hand of the Lord was in it. They filled their mission well. From them we were endowed with a legacy of liberty—a constitutional republic.

But today the Christian constitutionalist mourns for his country. He sees the spiritual and political faith of his fathers betrayed by wolves in sheep's clothing. He sees the forces of evil increasing in strength and momentum under the leadership of Satan, the archenemy of freedom. He sees the wicked honored and the valiant abused. He senses that his own generation faces Gethsemanes and Valley Forges that may yet rival or surpass the trials of the early apostles and the men of '76. And this gives him cause to reflect on the most basic of fundamentals, the reason for our existence. Once we understand the fundamental purpose for mortality, we may more easily chart a correct course in the perilous seas that are engulfing our nation.

This life is a probation: a probation in which you and I prove our mettle,

a probation that has eternal consequences for each of us. And now is our time and season—as every generation has had theirs—to learn our duties and to do them.

Men are free agents

The Lord has so arranged things in this life that men are free agents unto themselves to do good or evil. The Lord allows men to only go so far, but the latitude is great enough that some men promote much wickedness and other men much righteousness.

Clearly, there would be little trial of faith if we received our full reward immediately for every goodly deed, or immediate retribution for every sin. But that there will be an eventual reckoning for each, there is no question.

The Lord is displeased with wickedness, and he will help those who oppose it. But he has given all of us freedom to choose, while reserving for himself our final judgment. And herein lies the hope of all Christian constitutionalists. Why?

Because the fight for freedom is God's fight. For free agency is an eternal principle. It existed before this world was formed; it will exist forever. Some men may succeed in denying some aspects of this God-given freedom to their fellowmen, but their success is temporary. Freedom is a law of God, an eternal law. And, like any of God's laws, men cannot break it with impunity. They can only break themselves upon it. So when a man stands for freedom, he stands with God. And as long as he stands for freedom, he stands with God. Therefore, any man will be eternally vindicated and rewarded who stands for freedom.

Blessings for obedience

Men receive blessings by obedience to God's laws, and without obedience there is no blessing. Before the final triumphal return of the Lord, the question as to whether we may save our constitutional republic is simply based on two factors: the number of patriots and the extent of their obedience.

That the Lord desires to save this nation that he raised up, there is no

doubt. But that he leaves it up to us, with his help, is the awful reality.

There is a time and season for all righteous things, and many of life's failures arise when men neither take the time nor find the season to perform their eternal duties. What, then, in this time and season may best equip us to save our Christian constitutional legacy, while at the same time rescuing our own souls? May I humbly submit six suggestions:

Spirituality

1. *Spirituality.* In the Book of Mormon, sacred to me as scripture, the Lord states that America is a land choice above all others and that it shall remain free so long as the inhabitants worship the God of the land, Jesus Christ.

Certainly spirituality is the foundation upon which any battle against sin and tyranny must be waged. And because this is basically the struggle of the forces of Christ versus Antichrist, it is imperative that our people be in tune with the supreme leader of freedom, the Lord our God. And men only stay in tune when their lives are in harmony with God, for apart from God we cannot succeed, but as a partner with God, we cannot fail. We must be in the amoral and immoral world, but not of it.

Balance of duties

2. *Balance.* We have many responsibilities, and one cannot expect the full blessings of a kind Providence if he neglects any major duty.

A man has duties to his church, his home, his country, and his profession or job.

Duty to Church—Each man, in communication with God, must determine his responsibility to the Church. This becomes a serious consideration in a day when many pulpits are being turned into pipelines of collectivist propaganda, preaching the social gospel and denying basic principles of salvation. The least any Christian can do is to study daily the word of the Lord and seek divine aid through daily prayer. We invite all men to examine prayerfully The Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter-day Saints—the Mormon Church—which I testify is the Church of Christ, restored to the earth and led today by a prophet of God.

Duty to home—Fathers, you cannot delegate your duty as the head of the home. Mothers, train up your children in righteousness; do not attempt to save the world and thus let your own fireside fall apart. For many years now the Mormon Church has advised parents to set aside one night a week when the family meets together for an evening at home. At this time family goals and duties are discussed, spiritual guidance given, and recreation enjoyed. To this end the Church has published and distributes, free of charge, a home evening manual with helpful suggestions for each week's activities.

The duty of parents is to be of help to each other and to their children; then comes their duty to their neighbors, community, nation, and world, in that order. The home is the rock foundation, the cornerstone of civilization. No nation will ever rise above its homes. A modern prophet declares that: "No other success can compensate for failure in the home." (President David O. McKay, *The Improvement Era*, June 1964, p. 445.)

Duty to country—No one can delegate his duty to preserve his freedom, for the price of liberty is still eternal vigilance. There are now thousands of businessmen behind the Iron Curtain who, if they had their lives to live over, would balance their time more judiciously and give more devotion to their civic responsibilities. An ounce of energy in the preservation of freedom is worth a ton of effort to get it back once it is lost.

Duty to job—Every man should provide the necessities of food, clothing, and shelter for his family. As Paul wrote to Timothy:

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. 5:8.)

Indolence invites the benevolent straightjacket of the character-destroying welfare state. But a man pays too

high a price for worldly success if in his climb to prominence he sacrifices his spiritual, home, and civic responsibilities. How a person should apportion his time among his several duties requires good judgment and is a matter over which each should invite divine assistance.

Courageous action

3. *Courageous action.* I believe that, while we should ask the Lord's blessings on all our doings and should never do anything upon which we cannot ask his blessings, we should not expect the Lord to do for us what we can do for ourselves. I believe in faith and works, and that the Lord will bless more fully the man who works for what he prays for than he will the man who only prays.

Today you cannot effectively fight for freedom and not be attacked, and those who think they can are deceiving themselves. While I do not believe in stepping out of the path of duty to pick up a cross I do not need, a man is a coward who refuses to pick up a cross that clearly lies within his path.

A man must not only stand for the right principles, but he must also fight for them. Those who fight for principle can be proud of the friends they've gained and the enemies they've earned.

Education

4. *Education.* We must each of us do our homework. "My people are destroyed," said Hosea, "for lack of knowledge. . . ." (Hos. 4:6.) We must be wise as serpents; for, as the Apostle Paul said, we wrestle "against the rulers of the darkness . . . , against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12.)

We are going through the greatest, most insidious propaganda campaign of all time. Even the character-destroying "credibility gap" seems to be gaining respectability. We cannot believe all we read, and what we can believe is not all of the same value. We must sift. We must learn by study and prayer.

Study the scriptures and study the mortals who have been most con-

sistently accurate about the most important things. When your freedom and your eternal welfare are at stake, your information best be accurate.

Health

5. *Health.* To meet and beat the enemy will require clear heads and strong bodies. Hearts and hands grow strong, based on what they are fed. Let us take into our body and soul only those things that will make us more effective instruments. We need all the physical, mental, and moral power we can get.

Righteous concern about conditions is commendable when it leads to constructive action. But undue worry is debilitating. When we have done what we can do, then let's leave the rest to God.

Man needs beneficial recreation, a change of pace that refreshes him for heavy tasks ahead. Man also must take time to meditate, to sweep the cobwebs from his mind, so that he might get a more firm grip on the truth and spend less time chasing phantoms and dallying in projects of lesser worth.

Clean hearts and healthful food, exercise, early sleep and fresh air, wholesome recreation and meditation, combined with optimism that comes from fighting for the right and knowing you'll eventually win for keeps—this is the tonic every true Christian patriot needs and deserves.

Preparation

6. *Be Prepared.* We have a duty to survive, not only spiritually but also physically. Not survival at the cost of principles, for this is the surest way to defeat—but a survival that comes from intelligent preparation. We face days ahead that will test the moral and physical sinews of all of us.

The scriptural parable of the five wise and the five foolish virgins is a reminder that one can wait too long before he attempts to get his spiritual and temporal house in order. Are we prepared?

A man should not only be prepared to protect himself physically, but he should also have on hand sufficient

supplies to sustain himself and his family in an emergency. For many years the leaders of the Mormon Church have recommended, with instructions, that every family have on hand at least a year's supply of basic food, clothing, fuel (where possible), and provision for shelter. This has been most helpful to families suffering temporary reverses. It can and will be useful in many circumstances in the days ahead. We also need to get out of financial bondage, to be debt free.

Now these suggestions regarding spirituality, balance, courageous action, education, health, and preparation are given not only to help equip one for the freedom struggle, but also to help equip one for eternal life.

Those who hesitate to get into this fight because it is controversial fail to realize that life's decisions should be based on principles, not on Gallup polls.

There were men at Valley Forge who weren't sure how the revolution would end, but they were in a much better position to save their own souls and their country than those timid men whose major concern was deciding which side was going to win, or how to avoid controversy.

The basic purpose of life is to prove ourselves, not to be with the majority when it is wrong. Those who hesitate to get into the fight for freedom because they're not sure if we're going to win fail to realize that we will win in the long run, and for good.

Time is on the side of truth, and truth is eternal. Those who are fighting against freedom and other eternal principles of right may feel confident now, but they are shortsighted.

This is still God's world. The forces of evil, working through some mortals, have made a mess of a good part of it. But it is still God's world. In due time when each of us has had a chance to prove himself—including whether or not we are going to stand up for freedom—God will interject himself, and the final and eternal victory shall be for free agency. And then shall those weak-willed souls on the sidelines and those who took the wrong but temporarily popular course lament their decisions.

Let us get about our business, for any Christian constitutionalist who retreats from this battle jeopardizes his life here and hereafter. Seldom has so much responsibility hung on so few, so heavily; but our numbers are increasing, and we who have been warned have a responsibility to warn our neighbor.

Time favors truth

To his disciples, the Lord said that they should be of good cheer, for he had overcome the world—and so he had. And so can we, if we are allied with him. Time is on the side of truth, and the wave of the future is freedom. There is no question of the eventual, final, and lasting triumph of righteousness. The major question for each of us is what part will we play in helping to bring it to pass.

This is a glorious hour in which to live. Generations past and future will mark well our response to our awesome duty. There is a reason why we have been born in this day. Ours is the task to try to live and perpetuate the principles of the Christ and the Constitution in the face of tremendous odds. May we, with God's help, have strength for the battle and fill our mission in honor for God, family, and country.

The Lord declared that "if ye are prepared ye shall not fear." (D&C 38:30). May we prepare, then fear not, I humbly pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

He to whom you have just listened is Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve.

We are most grateful for the warm response from the managers and operators of over 235 television and radio stations in offering their facilities as a public service to make the proceedings of this conference available to millions throughout many parts of the world. We trust that the people enjoying this conference will express appreciation to their local radio and television station managers.

We appreciate the attendance here of educators, government officials,