

Bishop Victor L. Brown

Presiding Bishop

Recently some adult youth leaders were discussing problems our youth face today. One of them, a mother of 12, said, "It seems to me Satan has declared all-out war on our youth." How true this statement is!

War on righteousness

As a matter of fact, he declared war on all that is good and righteous before this world was. In the spirit world before the creation of this earth, a great council was held in which God the Father presented his plan having to do with the eternal life of man. The plan was to teach the people righteousness and permit them to exercise their free agency, choosing for themselves which way they would go. Jesus Christ espoused the plan saying, "Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever." (Moses 4:2.) But Lucifer proposed to amend the plan of the Father saying, "Here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor." (Moses 4:1.)

One-third of the hosts of heaven followed Satan. It was at this point that the greatest of all wars began. It has raged ever since with Satan as the commanding general of the forces opposed to that which is right.

Satan cast down

In the writings of Moses the Lord further describes this occurrence:

"Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down;

"And he became Satan, yea, even

the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice." (Moses 4:3-4.)

From the multitudes who would not hearken to the voice of the Lord and have been led captive at Satan's will, it would seem that Satan has achieved some significant victories. It reminds one of another people in another age.

Philistines and Israelites

The Philistines and the Israelites were at war. We are told:

"The Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and there was a valley between them.

"And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span." (1 Sam. 17:3-4.)

His armor and his weapons were in the same gigantic proportions to his unusual size. For forty days he taunted the Israelites: "Give me a man, that we may fight together.

"When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid." (1 Sam. 17:10-11.)

It was at this time that a young shepherd boy named David came on the scene. He witnessed the brazenness of the giant and the fear of the Israelites. He approached his brothers in the ranks, inquiring as to what was happening. His eldest brother criticized him for leaving the sheep, whereupon David said, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" (1 Sam. 17:29.)

Cause of righteousness

A youth asking his wavering adult

leaders, "Is there not a cause?" There are thousands of young men and women today who are asking the same question: "Is there not a cause?" Some hear no reply; others hear replies of little substance. And still others are led astray by causes which are counterfeit.

Having the stewardship under the direction of the First Presidency for the 12-to-18-year old youth in the Church throughout the world, I declare with all my soul—there is a cause! It is a cause worth giving one's life for. It is the cause of righteousness. It is a cause that every youth in this Church should rally to as he declares war on Satan and his legions. As David said to Goliath, so each youth should declare to Satan, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." (1 Sam. 17:45.)

In all this I have the greatest of faith in the outcome. Never before in history has there lived a more valiant generation of youth. I am convinced the spirits of this generation were held to come forth at this important time in history. Their potential is unlimited.

Opposition in all things

In this optimism there is also realism. We are taught there must needs be opposition in all things, hence, the need for good and evil, the one led by the Savior and the other by Satan. Satan is just as real as is the Savior. He is clever. He is strongly motivated. In his battle to enslave he will resort to any lie, any trickery, any means to accomplish his end. Perhaps his most pernicious lie is in teaching that there is no God. It is at this point I again declare to the youth of the Church there is a cause, and that cause should motivate all youth to firmly grasp the banner of the gospel of Jesus Christ and carry it to all the world, declaring to all that he does live, that the heavens are open, that there is a prophet on the earth today.

I am suggesting that each indi-

vidual put on the whole armor of God. He will then become an example to others, and many will follow in his footsteps. As each individual does this, he helps form the army that will win the great victory and ultimately prepare the world for the second coming of the Savior.

Knowledge of God

In putting on the whole armor of God, we must become acquainted with the Savior. At 14 Joseph Smith, in his quest for knowledge and wisdom, sought the Lord in prayer. God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision. He saw two personages, one saying of the other, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith 2:17.) This was the beginning of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth. If we have faith, we can prepare ourselves through prayer and study and gain the same assurance Joseph Smith had that God lives and that he and his Son are separate personages. Jesus of Nazareth then will become the center of our lives. With this assurance, our cause cannot be hindered. Without it, we have no cause.

Individual attack

Many battles have been lost because of difficulty in not always having a clearly defined battlefield. This is not the case in this war. There is but one real battlefield, and that is with each individual. The only real attack comes upon you and me individually; and, of course, that is where the only effective defense will be made.

If Satan could but capture our minds, he would have won the battle and the war. He can only do this if we let him. If we refuse to walk with him, he will have no power over us, for God gave us our free agency and Satan cannot take it away. So what I am suggesting is that we refuse to even walk on the same street with Satan. In other

words, not only should we avoid evil, we should avoid the very appearance of evil.

The issues

Let us look at a few of the issues we are doing battle over. How about appearance? If we would appear as though the cause of righteousness is our cause, we would follow the wise admonition of President N. Eldon Tanner:

"Modesty in dress is a quality of mind and heart, born of respect for oneself, one's fellowmen, and the Creator of us all.

"Modesty reflects an attitude of humility, decency, and propriety. Consistent with these principles and guided by the Holy Spirit, let parents, teachers, and youth discuss the particulars of dress, grooming, and personal appearance, and with free agency accept responsibility and choose the right." (*Friend*, June 1971, p. 3.)

Gospel principles

Based on the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, then, there is no question on which side we stand on honesty, integrity, and industry, nor where we stand with regard to moral cleanliness. Such conduct as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, abortion, or any other form or degree of improper, intimate, personal conduct should be as unacceptable to us as it is to our Heavenly Father. Our battle lines are clearly drawn on the question of drugs, liquor, tobacco, tea, coffee, or any other substance harmful to our bodies.

Through the lives we live there should be no question about our position with regard to the first and second great commandments:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

"This is the first and great commandment.

"And the second is like unto it,

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:37-39.)

Miracle of forgiveness

As we finally clothe ourselves with the whole armor of God, we will not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ but will be proud to be counted among the valiant, even though we may be looked upon as a peculiar people.

I know there are some who desire to grasp this banner but feel unworthy to do so. May I plead with you to listen to the counsel of a prophet, President Spencer W. Kimball:

"The mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to call people everywhere to repentance. Those who heed the call . . . can be partakers of the miracle of forgiveness. God will wipe away from their eyes the tears of anguish, and remorse, and consternation, and fear, and guilt. Dry eyes will replace the wet ones, and smiles of satisfaction will replace the worried, anxious look.

"What relief! What comfort! What joy! Those laden with transgressions and sorrows and sin may be forgiven and cleansed and purified if they will return to their Lord, learn of him, and keep his commandments. And all of us needing to repent of day-to-day follies and weaknesses can likewise share in this miracle." (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, Bookcraft, 1969, pp. 367-368.)

Is there a cause? Most assuredly there is. I challenge each young person in this church to grasp the banner and march shoulder to shoulder with his parents, his bishop, and other adult and youth leaders to a glorious victory in the kingdom of our Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

President N. Eldon Tanner

Bishop Victor L. Brown, Presiding Bishop of the Church, has just spoken to us.

The congregation and choir will now join in singing, "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet."