

Promise to those who find Christ and trust him

All of us are in trouble. There is no just man on the earth who doeth good and sinneth not. (See Eccl. 7:20.)

In the most personal of his parables, the Savior identified himself fully with the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the homeless, sick, and imprisoned. "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: . . . I was a stranger, and ye took me in." (Matt. 25:35.) So many are burdened with earthly care, the stain of sin, poverty, pain, disability, loneliness, bereavement, rejection. The promise of Christ's mercy is sure and certain to those who find him and trust him. He who stilled the winds and waves can bring peace to the sinner and to the suffering saint. And we as his agents are not alone to declare his word, but to represent him in doing unto the least of his brethren that which he himself would do were he now here.

In a refugee camp in Asia was a young former schoolteacher who with her mother had escaped their country after having watched the brutal murder of others in their family. She had been viciously violated to the point where she had vowed never to speak again in this depraved world. It was her way of protesting against the wickedness imposed upon her and countless others. For more than five years she spoke not a word. Then one day she came into the influence of some of our

Church representatives who are performing daily miracles of love in several refugee camps. They had no medical magic, these selfless young ladies representing us there, no professional competence to deal with a tortured mind and spirit. They prayed for her, took her hand, and spoke words of love to her; and she answered! For the first time in five years she spoke, and she has been speaking since. The Spirit of him who said, "Peace be still" (Mark 4:39), reached out through faithful instruments, touched the storm center of a troubled soul, stilled the winds and waves of torment, and brought faith and hope again.

For me and mine, and for you, I pray to be worthy to carry the same banner as our beloved brother who found the way to mercy and who exemplifies in his life what I heard him humbly declare: "My specialty is mercy."

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16.)

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder Marion D. Hanks has just spoken to us. We shall now hear from Elder James E. Faust, who will be followed by President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

Elder James E. Faust

Solemn procession with bodies of Joseph and Hyrum

It was Friday morning, June 28, 1844, and already the summer sun was hot in Illinois. Since about eight o'clock that morning Dr. Willard Richards, Samuel H. Smith, and nine

others had plodded along the dusty road between Carthage and Nauvoo, Illinois. Moving along the road with the solemn procession were two wagons heaped with bushes to protect their cargo from the blistering heat of the sun.

Laid out on the wagons were the lifeless bodies of Joseph Smith, age thirty-eight, over six feet tall, and Hyrum, his brother, age forty-four, and even larger in stature than Joseph. Wearily, Dr. Richards and Samuel Smith, brother to the two murdered men, pressed toward Nauvoo and talked of the events just the day before during which Joseph and Hyrum were gunned down by an armed mob with painted faces. The two victims, along with Dr. Richards and John Taylor, were lodged in Carthage Jail, supposedly for their protection, when the mob, numbering from 150 to 200 marauders, stormed the jail and shot to death their intended victims.

Word of the deaths had already reached Nauvoo, headquarters city for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As the wagons and their foot-weary guardians entered the city, several thousand citizens greeted the procession with the most solemn lamentations and mourning.

The bloodied bodies were tenderly removed from the wagons at the Nauvoo Mansion and were carefully washed from head to foot. The various wounds were filled with cotton, soaked in camphor, and death masks were impressed on each face. Fine, plain clothing was then placed on each body. When these preparations were completed, the bodies were viewed that night by the bereaved widows and children of the two men, along with many of their closest associates. Then on Saturday, more than ten thousand mourning Saints viewed the remains of their beloved Prophet Joseph and his brother, the Patriarch Hyrum. The bodies were then secretly and lovingly buried. (See *History of the Church*, 6:614-31.)

Dramatic growth of the Church

Some of the enemies of Joseph Smith exulted in their infamous deeds; and many proclaimed that the Church,

which he had restored and for which he had given his life, would die with him.

But, to the surprise of its enemies, the Church did not die nor did the work of Joseph Smith cease with his mortal death. What has transpired in a century and a half bears eloquent testimony to the eternal nature of the work of this singularly remarkable man, Joseph Smith. The Church which he restored has had dramatic growth in many parts of the earth. It has produced an unequaled missionary system and an unmatched welfare program. Its governing system gives priesthood power and authority from God to all worthy male members, at the same time recognizing the exalted status of women as being equal to men. The Church has an inspired law of health and temporal well-being far ahead of its time. By revelation from God, the Church also possesses those keys, saving principles, and ordinances which will bring eternal exaltation to mankind, living and dead.

True believer must have testimony of Joseph Smith

Because of these and other reasons, millions of people have become members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But to each true believer there must ultimately and finally come a conviction that Joseph Smith was a revealer of truth, a prophet of God. Each must be convinced that God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ did appear to Joseph Smith and did commission him to reestablish the church of Christ upon the face of the earth.

I have such a conviction, and it is my humble desire to share with you some of the things which verify my testimony of Joseph Smith and his work. My own witness is a spiritual one more than a scientific or historical one. I doubt that the gospel of Jesus Christ as restored to earth through the

Prophet Joseph Smith and as taught by all the prophets who have succeeded him will ever be completely provable by the scientific method alone. It must be accepted by faith and understood by the gift and power of God. For instance, one of the truths revealed by Joseph Smith on February 27, 1833, taught of the harmful effects of tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcoholic beverages. Such teachings today can be proven scientifically, yet in my opinion, the greatest promises contained in the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89) are spiritual. It contains a promise of wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, and of the passing by of the destroying angel as the children of Israel were passed by. (See D&C 89:19, 21.)

Contribution of the Book of Mormon

One of the most significant contributions of Joseph Smith is his work in translating and publishing the Book of Mormon, a sacred volume of scripture brought forth from ancient records. When it was first published in 1830, there was little scientific or historical evidence to substantiate the claims of Joseph Smith that the record came from metallic plates and told of ancient civilizations on the North and South American continents. Today such outward evidences have been discovered and help confirm that Joseph Smith was telling the truth about the Book of Mormon.

But we also still look to the spiritual witnesses for our confirming belief in the book. Critics have long tried to explain away the Book of Mormon but simply have not been successful. Theories concerning its origin have come and gone, and the book still lives on to testify that Jesus is the Christ.

Most objective, analytical scholars have come to recognize that it would have been impossible for an uneducated boy such as Joseph Smith,

reared on the frontiers of America, to write the Book of Mormon. It contains so many exalted concepts, has such different writing styles, and is compiled in such a way that no one person could be its author. The honest inquirer can be led by faith to believe that Joseph Smith did translate the Book of Mormon from ancient plates of gold which were written with engraved characters in the reformed Egyptian language. No other explanations which have seriously challenged Joseph Smith's own account of the Book of Mormon have been able to survive as being factually correct. The evidences of a century and a half continue, and these increasingly affirm that Joseph Smith spoke the truth, completely, honestly, and humbly.

"Joseph did not claim perfection"

As I submit to you my testimony of Joseph Smith, I acknowledge his humanness along with his great spiritual powers. He did not claim to be divine, nor a perfect man. He claimed only to be a mortal man with human feelings and imperfections, trying honestly to fulfill the divine mission given to him. He so describes himself in recorded counsel given to some of the members of the Church who had just arrived in Nauvoo on October 29, 1842. Said the Prophet, "I told them I was but a man, and they must not expect me to be perfect; if they expected perfection from me, I should expect it from them; but if they would bear with my infirmities and the infirmities of the brethren, I would likewise bear with their infirmities." (*History of the Church*, 5:181.)

I am impressed with his complete candor, for in addition to admitting his own humanness, he also recorded the declarations from the Lord which were given to him in the nature of loving reproof. As such reminders came to him, sometimes kindly and sometimes sternly, he dictated them as the

mouthpiece of the Lord to those who transcribed the revelations. One such example is found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 5, verse 21: "And now I command you, my servant Joseph, to repent and walk more uprightly before me, and to yield to the persuasions of men no more."

While Joseph sought perfection, he did not claim perfection. If he were intending to fabricate a great falsehood or wanted to perpetrate a fraud or practice deceit, would he have been so truthful about his own humanness? His complete candor in admitting human frailties and in declaring the loving discipline of God offers powerful proof of his honesty and probity. His statements stand on more solid footing because they were declarations against human nature and admissions against self-interest.

He knew that such candor would and did make him an object of hatred, ridicule, and social disapproval, but he spoke openly the unvarnished truth. He was prepared for such vicissitudes of life early in his ministry. He was told by the angel Moroni in 1823, only three years after his glorious vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ, that his name would be known for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples, and that both good and evil would be spoken of him. (See JS-H 1:33.) However, the intensity of the evil and persecution surprised even Joseph and caused him to ask on one occasion: "Why should the powers of darkness combine against me? Why the opposition and persecution that arose against me, almost in my infancy?" (JS-H 1:20.) But he met the challenges and overcame the strife and was stronger because of them.

Attracted all ages and all classes

There should be no exaggerated emphasis on the fallibility or mortal failings of Joseph Smith. They were only things that are a part of any

human being. He and his work enjoyed the benediction of Deity. On a special occasion, the Lord said to him, "Verily, thus saith the Lord unto you, my servant Joseph Smith, I am well pleased with your offering and acknowledgments, which you have made; for unto this end have I raised you up, that I might show forth my wisdom through the weak things of the earth." (D&C 124:1.)

I am deeply impressed by the kinds of people who became associates of Joseph Smith. His personality was a magnet to many people, attracting those of all ages and all classes. Many whom he inspired were extremely intelligent, dedicated, and capable men and women. The courage which they evidenced in behalf of the work of Joseph Smith, along with their sacrifices, suffering, and dedication, were almost beyond belief.

At the outset I mentioned Dr. Willard Richards, whose loyalty to Joseph is so typical. Before Joseph went to the Carthage Jail, he said to Dr. Richards: "If we go into the cell, will you go in with us?" The doctor answered, "Brother Joseph you did not ask me to cross the river with you—you did not ask me to come to Carthage—you did not ask me to come to jail with you—and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free." Joseph said, "You cannot." The doctor replied, "I will." (*History of the Church*, 6:616.)

Following the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, his successor as prophet was the practical, able Brigham Young. Of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young said:

"When I first heard him preach, he brought heaven and earth together; and all the priests of the day could not tell me anything correct about heaven, hell, God, angels, or devils; they were as blind as Egyptian darkness. When I saw Joseph Smith, he took heaven,

figuratively speaking, and brought it down to earth; and he took the earth, brought it up, and opened up, in plainness and simplicity, the things of God; and that is the beauty of his mission." (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954, p. 458.)

Expanding inheritance of Joseph Smith

The results of a century and a half of this church offer great authentication to the truthfulness of Joseph Smith's story. The work of this church moves forward in an astonishing way. The great body of the Latter-day Saints remain faithful to their testimonies of Joseph Smith and his work. Since Joseph's day, millions have accepted by faith and have had confirmed by the Holy Spirit that Joseph's account of seeing the Father and the Son is true and that he restored to earth the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

As the years pass since Joseph's life and death, his history will no doubt be analyzed, picked at, criticized, challenged, and pored over. But the evidences of the truthfulness of his statements will continue to mount. The devotion and commitment of those who accept the restored gospel will continue to be severely tested. Their faith will be sorely tried, as has been the case with so many in the past. But like Joseph himself, millions will live and die faithful to the gospel he restored. As time moves on, the stature of Joseph Smith will loom ever larger. He will stand higher and higher in the esteem of mankind. Ever so many will come to a profound conviction, as I have, that there is a divine source to the message he taught and an eternal purpose to the work which he restored on earth.

There comes down through my family a legacy of testimony concerning the truthfulness of Joseph

Smith's work. I learned of this bequest as a small boy at my mother's knee. My great-great-grandfather, Edward Partridge, was intimately associated with the Prophet Joseph for several years prior to his losing his life in consequence of the persecution. (See *History of the Church*, 4:132.) He was baptized by Joseph. In a revelation received by the Prophet, he was called as the first bishop of the restored Church. (See D&C 41:9.)

Grandfather was so tortured, humiliated, and suffered so much in his calling from lawless mobs, and was still so steadfast and faithful, that he could not possibly have doubted the genuineness of the revelation that appointed him. Like others who were close to the Prophet, he knew Joseph's heart and soul. Grandfather could not have been deceived. I believe his life and death both prove that he did not lie. His devotion, suffering, and sacrifice eloquently testify that he had implicit faith in Joseph as an inspired servant of God.

In addition to this heritage, I have my own inner witness which confirms to my soul that the Prophet Joseph Smith, as the instrument of God, revealed the greatest body of truth that has come to mankind since the Savior himself walked upon the earth.

What has been taught at this pulpit for the last two days is an extension of the expanding inheritance of truth left to all of us by the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was given to save and exalt mankind as directed by the Lord Jesus Christ. I so testify with profound gratitude, in the name of the risen Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Before hearing President Tanner's concluding remarks, we express our sincere gratitude to the choirs that have performed and to their conductors and accompanists.

We appreciate the coverage given by the press and the electronic media.