

When Elder Wilson's mother and his father visit that rural cemetery and place flowers of remembrance on the grave of their son, I feel certain they will remember the day he was born, the pride they felt, and the genuine joy that was theirs. This tiny child they will remember became the mighty man who later brought to them the opportunity to achieve celestial glory. Perhaps on these pilgrimages, when emotions are close to the surface and tears cannot be restrained, they will again thank God for their missionary son, who never lost the faith of a child, and then ponder deep within their hearts the Master's words, "And a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

Peace will then be their blessing. It will be our blessing, also, as we remem-

ber and follow the Prince of Peace. That we may do so is my sincere prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee" without announcement.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, Second Counselor in the First Presidency, has addressed us, followed by the Tabernacle Choir singing "The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee."

President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will now address us.

President Howard W. Hunter

God requires personal commitment

As I think of the blessings God has given us and the many beauties of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I am aware that along the way we are asked to make certain contributions in return, contributions of time or of money or of other resources. These are all valued and all necessary, but they do not constitute our full offering to God. Ultimately, what our Father in Heaven will require of us is more than a contribution; it is a total commitment, a complete devotion, all that we are and all that we can be.

Please understand that I do not speak only of a commitment to the Church and its activities, although that always needs to be strengthened. No, I speak more specifically of a commitment that is shown in our individual behavior, in our personal integrity, in our loyalty to home and family and community, as well as to the Church. Of course, all of these loyalties are interrelated and closely linked because it is the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus Christ that shapes our behavior and forms our char-

acter in all areas of our life—personally, within the home, in our professions and community life, as well as in our devotion to the Church that bears his name.

The Lord is the standard

If we can pattern our life after the Master, and take his teachings and example as the supreme pattern for our own, we will not find it difficult to be consistent and loyal in every walk of life, for we will be committed to a single, sacred standard of conduct and belief. Whether at home or in the marketplace, whether at school or long after school is behind us, whether we are acting totally alone or in concert with a host of other people, our course will be clear and our standards will be obvious. We will have determined, as the Prophet Alma said, "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

This loyalty obviously includes support of the institutional church, but one of the purposes of that church is to alter

and improve the way we live every other aspect of our lives as well, wherever we are and in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, "even until death."

Let me recall briefly just one of those magnificent examples from scripture where three relatively young people stood by their principles and held to their integrity even though it seemed apparent that to do so would cost them their lives.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

Approximately 586 years before Christ, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, marched against the city of Jerusalem and conquered it. So impressed was he with the qualities and learning of the children of Israel that he had several of them brought to the king's court.

Trouble came to the Israelites the day Nebuchadnezzar made a golden idol and commanded all in the province of Babylon to worship it, a command that the three young Israelites—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—quietly refused. The king was full of "rage and fury" and demanded that they be brought before him (Daniel 3:13). He informed them that if they did not fall down before the golden image at the appointed moment, "ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Then with some self-satisfaction he asked, "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (3:15).

The three young men responded courteously but without hesitation:

"If it be so," they said, "[that you threaten us with death,] our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

"But if not [if for whatever reason he chooses not to save us from the fire], be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (3:17-18).

Of course, Nebuchadnezzar was more furious than ever and ordered that one of the furnaces be heated to seven times its normal temperature. Then he

commanded that these three valiant young men be thrown fully clothed into the midst of the fire. Indeed, the king was so insistent and the flame so hot that the soldiers who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego fell dead from the heat of the furnace as they cast their captives forward.

Then transpired one of those great miracles to which the faithful are entitled according to the will of God. These three young men stood and walked about calmly in the midst of the furnace and were not burned. Indeed, when they were later called out of the furnace by the astonished king himself, their clothing was unharmed, their skin was free from any burn, not a hair of their head was singed. Not even the smell of smoke had come upon these courageous, committed young men.

"Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," said the king, "who hath . . . delivered his servants that trusted in him, . . . [who] yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. . . ."

"Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon" (Daniel 3:28, 30).

Living with integrity and faith

The ability to stand by one's principles, to live with integrity and faith according to one's belief—that is what matters, that is the difference between a contribution and a commitment. That devotion to true principle—in our individual lives, in our homes and families, and in all places where we meet and influence other people—that devotion is what God is ultimately requesting of us.

I recall some years ago our late and beloved colleague President Stephen L. Richards giving a university address entitled "Tried and Not Found Wanting." He spoke of people in our day, including young people in our day, who must be able to withstand the various tests of faithfulness and loyalty that life puts to all of us from time to time. None of his

examples was so dramatic as being cast into a fiery furnace, but the integrity involved was the same, and so was the need for commitment to high principle. He said:

"How do [we] feel about honor and integrity? What is [our] reaction to polite lying to facilitate easy social [relationships]? How much tolerance have [we] for either suppression or misrepresentation of facts to promote business advantage? Do [we] accept without compunction the old adage that all's fair in love and war and politics and college athletics? . . .

"How sacredly do [we] regard the good name of another? . . . [Do we pass on] spicy bits [of] entertaining conversation, . . . repeating rumors and stories which have not been submitted to the test [of truth]?" (*Where Is Wisdom?* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1955], pp. 80-81).

President Kimball's example

In the same vein, President Spencer W. Kimball wrote:

"I may not be able to eliminate pornographic trash, but my family and I need not buy or view it.

"I may not be able to close disreputable businesses, but I can stay away from areas of questioned honor and ill repute.

"I may not be able to greatly reduce the divorces of the land or save all broken homes and frustrated children, but I can keep my own home a congenial one, my marriage happy, my home a heaven, and my children well-adjusted.

"I may not be able to stop the growing claims to freedom from laws based on morals, or change all opinions regarding looseness in sex and growing perversions, but I can guarantee devotion to all high ideals and standards in my own home, and I can work toward giving my own family a happy, interdependent, spiritual life.

"I may not be able to stop all graft and dishonesty in high places, but I myself can be honest and upright, full of integrity and true honor" (*Faith Precedes*

the Miracle [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 247).

These are some of the routine but crucial tests of our day in which we must be willing to stand true and with integrity and honor. Indeed, even in polite social situations we must be willing "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

Commitment to home and family

Please permit me to close by stressing one place in society where that strength and commitment must be shown if we are to survive as a nation, as a people, or even as a fully successful church. We simply must have love and integrity and strong principles in our homes. We must have an abiding commitment to marriage and children and morality. We must succeed where success counts most for the next generation.

Surely that home is strongest and most beautiful in which we find each person sensitive to the feelings of others, striving to serve others, striving to live at home the principles we demonstrate in more public settings. We need to try harder to live the gospel in our family circles. Our homes deserve our most faithful commitments. A child has the right to feel that in his home he is safe, that there he has a place of protection from the dangers and evils of the outside world. Family unity and integrity are necessary to supply this need. A child needs parents who are happy in their relationship to each other, who are working happily toward the fulfillment of ideal family living, who love their children with a sincere and unselfish love, and who are committed to the family's success.

President N. Eldon Tanner said: "Just imagine the reversal that would take place if full integrity were to rule in family life. There would be complete fidelity. Husbands would be faithful to wives, and wives to husbands. There would be no living in adulterous relationships in lieu of marriage. Homes would

abound in love, children and parents would have respect for one another. . . . [How else will our children come to] value honesty and integrity?" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1977, p. 20; or *Ensign*, May 1977, p. 16).

A successful life, the good life, the righteous Christian life requires something more than a contribution, though every contribution is valuable. Ultimately it requires commitment—whole souled, deeply held, eternally cherished commitment to the principles we know to be true in the commandments God has given. We need such loyalty to the Church, but that must immediately be interpreted as a loyalty in our personal habits and behavior, integrity in the wider community and marketplace, and—for the future's sake—devotion and character in our marriages and homes and families.

If we will be true and faithful to our principles, committed to a life of honesty and integrity, then no king or contest or fiery furnace will be able to compromise us. For the success of the kingdom of God on earth, may we stand as witnesses for him "at all times and in all things,

and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The choir sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer" without announcement.

President Hinckley

We have just heard from President Howard W. Hunter, President of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, in whose recovery we have witnessed a remarkable and wonderful miracle. The Tabernacle Choir then sang "Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer."

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Redeemer of Israel," following which we shall hear from Elder Carlos E. Asay, a member of the Presidency of the Quorums of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."

Elder Carlos E. Asay

A giant leap for mankind

I pray for the influence of the Holy Spirit as I discuss with you a most sacred subject—a subject that I hope will have special significance to those of you who may be investigating the Church. On July 20, 1969, astronauts landed on the moon, a planet located some 239,000 miles from the earth. Millions of people the world over witnessed this historic event on television and stared in amazement as the lunar module came to rest on the moon's surface. All were thrilled when Neil Armstrong exited the spacecraft and announced: "One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."

The press coverage of this monumental achievement was broad. It occupied headlines and was the subject of feature stories for many days. After all, the moon landing had opened new fron-

tiers of space travel, revealed new knowledge about the universe, and represented a major investment of human resources. Some reporters declared that the moon landing was the greatest event in the history of mankind since the resurrection of Christ.

I do stand in awe of the recent developments in space technology. My mind does not comprehend even a fraction of the miracles wrought by knowledgeable men of the world who have probed the universe. However, I take issue with those who believe that the placement of men upon the moon is the greatest occurrence of the last two thousand years. I do so because I know of an event wherein the Creator of the universe himself came to earth in answer to an obscure boy's humble prayer and revealed pure theology.