

“For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

“That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God” (D&C 76:22–24).

Yes, for me it is as clear as the night from the day. Their witness of the Savior is true. I have heard His voice as I have read His word in the sacred writings of the prophets of the Book of Mormon and rejoiced with the further light and knowledge granted to our latter-day prophets. I add my witness to theirs:

He lives; I know He lives. This is His church. May we all look in the right places and ask the right questions and thus be taught by His Spirit to know the truth, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard the remarks of Helvécio Martins and Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks, a member of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder James E. Faust, also of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder Dallin H. Oaks

A few months ago, I received a letter from a Church member who posed an unusual question: “Do I have a right to bear testimony of the Savior? Or is that the sole prerogative of the Twelve?” In response, I will share some thoughts on why every member of this church should bear witness and testimony of Jesus Christ.

First parents established a pattern

In the beginning, God commanded Adam, “Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore” (Moses 5:8). Then the Holy Ghost, “which beareth record of the Father and the Son,” came upon Adam and Eve, and they “blessed the name of God, and they made all things known unto their sons and their daughters” (Moses 5:9, 12).

Later, Enoch described how God had taught Adam that all must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, whose atoning sacrifice made possible the forgiveness of sins, and that they must teach these things to their children (see Moses 6:52–59).

And so our first parents established the pattern, receiving a testimony

from the Holy Ghost and then bearing witness of the Father and the Son to those around them.

Ways to witness of Christ

The prophet Nephi described the ordinance of baptism as an occasion when persons would witness unto the Father that they were willing to take upon them the name of Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:13). Similarly, the Lord has specified that those who desire to be baptized in this dispensation should “come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they . . . are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ” (D&C 20:37; see also Moroni 6:3). We renew that promise when we partake of the sacrament (see D&C 20:77; Moroni 4:3).

We also witness of Christ by our membership in the Church that bears his name (see 3 Nephi 27:7; D&C 115:4).

We are commanded to pray unto the Father in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ (see 3 Nephi 18:19, 21, 23; see also Moses 5:8), and to do “all things . . . in the name of Christ” (D&C 46:31).

If we follow these commandments, we serve as witnesses of Jesus Christ through our baptism, our membership in his church, our partaking of the sacrament, and our prayers and other actions in his name.

Some of us fall short as witnesses

But our duty to be witnesses of Jesus Christ requires more than this, and I fear that some of us fall short. Latter-day Saints can become so preoccupied with our own agendas that we can forget to witness and testify of Christ.

I quote from a recent letter I received from a member in the United States. He described what he heard in his fast and testimony meeting:

"I sat and listened to seventeen testimonies and never heard Jesus mentioned or referred to in any way. I thought I might be in [some other denomination], but I supposed not because there were no references to God, either. . . .

"The following Sunday, I again attended church. I sat through a priesthood lesson, a Gospel Doctrine lesson, and seven sacrament meeting speakers and never once heard the name of Jesus or any reference to him."

Perhaps that description is exaggerated. Surely, it is exceptional. I quote it because it provides a vivid reminder for all of us.

Stand as witnesses of God

In answer to the question, "What are the fundamental principles of your religion?" the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1938], p. 121).

When Alma spoke to a group of prospective members at the Waters of Mormon, he instructed them on the duties of those who were "desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people" (Mosiah 18:8). One of those duties was "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death" (Mosiah 18:9).

How to become witnesses

How do members become witnesses? The original Apostles were eyewitnesses to the ministry and resurrection of the Savior (see Acts 10:39-41). He told them, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8; see also 10:42-43). However, he cautioned them that their witnessing would be after they had received the Holy Ghost (see Acts 1:8; see also Luke 24:49).

An eyewitness was not enough. Even the witness and testimony of the original Apostles had to be rooted in the testimony of the Holy Ghost. A prophet has told us that the witness of the Holy Ghost makes an impression on our soul that is more significant than "a visitation of an angel" (Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-56], 1:44). And the Bible shows that when we testify on the basis of this witness, the Holy Ghost testifies to those who hear our words (see Acts 2; 10:44-47).

Every member should bear witness

When Peter and the other Apostles were brought before the civil authorities, he testified that Jesus Christ was "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Then Peter added, "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them

that obey him" (5:32). The mission of the Holy Ghost is to witness of the Father and the Son (see 2 Nephi 31:18; 3 Nephi 28:11; D&C 20:27). Consequently, everyone who has received the witness of the Holy Ghost has a duty to share that testimony with others.

Apostles have the calling and ordination to be special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world (see D&C 107:23), but the duty to witness and testify of Christ at all times and in all places applies to every member of the Church who has received the testimony of the Holy Ghost.

The book of Luke records two examples of this. In obedience to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the temple at Jerusalem after forty days, to present him to the Lord. There, two aged and spiritual temple workers received a witness of his identity and testified of him. Simeon, who had known by revelation from the Holy Ghost that he should not taste of death until he had seen the Messiah, took the infant in his arms and testified to his divine mission (see Luke 2:25–35). Anna, whom the scripture called "a prophetess" (Luke 2:36), recognized the Messiah "and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

Anna and Simeon were eyewitnesses to the infant, but, just like the Apostles, their knowledge of his divine mission came through the witness of the Holy Ghost. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). Therefore, we can properly say that when each received this witness, Simeon was a prophet and Anna was a prophetess. Each then fulfilled the prophetic duty to testify to those around them. As Peter said, "To [Christ] give all the prophets witness" (Acts 10:43). This was what Moses meant when he expressed the wish "that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29).

The scriptures describe other occasions when ordinary members—men

and women—bore witness of Christ. The Book of Mormon tells of King Lamoni and his queen, who testified of their Redeemer (see Alma 19). The Bible describes the witness of the Holy Ghost coming upon the kinsmen and friends of Cornelius, who were then heard to "magnify God" (Acts 10:24, 46).

Our scriptural duty to witness of the Savior and to testify of his divine Sonship has been affirmed by the prophets in our own day.

We are told that the commandments are given and the gospel is proclaimed that every person "might speak in the name of God the Lord, even the Savior of the world" (D&C 1:20).

Gifts of knowing and believing

Spiritual gifts come by the power of the Holy Ghost, that all the faithful may be benefited. One of these gifts is "to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world" (D&C 46:13). Those who receive that gift have the duty to testify of it. We know this because immediately after describing the gift of knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord says, "To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful" (D&C 46:14; see also 3 Nephi 19:28). Those who have the gift to know must give their witness so that those who have the gift to believe on their words can enjoy the benefit of that gift.

Valiant in the testimony of Jesus

Speaking to some of the earliest missionaries of this dispensation, the Lord said: "But with some I am not well pleased, for they will not open their mouths, but they hide the talent which I have given unto them, because of the fear of man. Wo unto such, for mine anger is kindled against them" (D&C 60:2).

In contrast, the Lord gave this great promise to those who were valiant in bearing testimony: "For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast . . . in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you" (D&C 84:61).

This caution and promise were directed specifically to missionaries, but other scriptures suggest that they apply to other members as well.

In his vision of the spirits of the dead, President Joseph F. Smith described "the spirits of the just" as those "who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality" (D&C 138:12).

In contrast, in his vision of the three degrees of glory, the Prophet Joseph Smith described those souls who go to the terrestrial kingdom as the "honorable men of the earth," who were "not valiant in the testimony of Jesus" (D&C 76:75, 79).

What does it mean to be "valiant in the testimony of Jesus"? Surely this includes keeping his commandments and serving him. But wouldn't it also include bearing witness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Redeemer, to believers and nonbelievers alike? As the Apostle Peter taught the Saints of his day, we should "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] a reason of the hope that is in [us]" (1 Peter 3:15).

All of us need to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus. As believers in Christ, we affirm the truth of Peter's testimony in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12; see also D&C 109:4). We know from modern revelation that we can come unto the Father only in his name (see D&C 93:19). As the Book of Mormon teaches, salvation is "in and through the atoning blood of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent" (Mosiah 3:18; see also Moses 6:52, 59).

The need for us to profess our faith

To those who are devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, I say there has never been a greater need for us to profess our faith, privately and publicly.

When the gospel was first restored, the pulpits of this land were aflame with the testimony of Jesus, the divine Son of God and Savior of the world. True, the fulness of his doctrine and the power of his priesthood had been lost from the earth, but there were many good and honorable men and women who were valiant in their own testimonies of Jesus. Our earliest missionaries concentrated their message on the Restoration—the calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the restoring of priesthood authority—since they could assume that most of those they taught had a fundamental belief in Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Today, our missionaries cannot make that assumption. There are still many God-fearing people who testify to the divinity of Jesus Christ. But there are many more—even in the formal ranks of Christianity—who doubt his existence or deny his divinity. As I see the deterioration in religious faith that has happened in my own lifetime, I am convinced that we who are members of his church need to be increasingly valiant in our testimony of Jesus.

Speaking almost twenty years ago, President Harold B. Lee said: "Fifty years ago or more, when I was a missionary, our greatest responsibility was to defend the great truth that the Prophet Joseph Smith was divinely called and inspired and that the Book of Mormon was indeed the word of God. But even at that time there were the unmistakable evidences that there was coming into the religious world actually a question about the Bible and about the divine calling of the Master, himself. Now, fifty years later, our greatest responsibility and anxiety is to defend the divine mission of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, for all about us, even among those who claim to be professors of the Christian faith, are those not will-

ing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God" (address delivered at LDS Student Association Fireside, Utah State University, 10 Oct. 1971).

Our knowledge of the literal divinity, resurrection, and atonement of Jesus Christ is more certain and more distinctive with each passing year. That is one reason the Lord inspired his prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, to have us reemphasize our study and testimony of the Book of Mormon, whose mission is "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God" (Book of Mormon title page).

Guard against careless omissions

We live in a time when too many who purport to be Christians have a cause that comes ahead of Christ. For example, a national magazine recently reported an innovation by a new bishop of a prominent Christian church. Their ministers have always consecrated the emblems of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ in the name of the "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." However, in an effort to use what are called "nonsexist words," this new bishop has begun to consecrate the eucharist in the name of the "Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer" ("Fretful Murmur in the Cathedral," *Insight*, 24 Apr. 1989, p. 47). Such trendy and expedient tampering with the Christian faith is illustrative of the extent to which some are unwilling to witness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Such deliberate deviations are not likely to be made by faithful Latter-day

Saints. However, we need to be on guard against careless omissions and oversights in our personal testimonies, in our formal instruction, and in our worship and funeral services.

Be not ashamed

In addition, each of us has many opportunities to proclaim our belief to friends and neighbors, fellow workers, and casual acquaintances. I hope we will take these opportunities to express our love for our Savior, our witness of his divine mission, and our determination to serve him.

If we do all of this, we can say, like the Apostle Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16).

And, we can say, like the prophet Nephi, "We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, . . . that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins" (2 Nephi 25:26).

I testify of Jesus Christ, the Lord God of Israel, the light and life of the world, as I affirm the truth of his gospel, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Council of the Twelve.

Elder James E. Faust of the Council of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker for this session.

Elder James E. Faust

Being a parent is a divine calling

My beloved brothers and sisters and friends, I ask for your faith and prayers this afternoon as I feel moved upon to discuss a subject which I have chosen to call the greatest challenge in

the world. It has to do with the privilege and responsibility of being good parents. On this subject there are about as many opinions as there are parents, yet there are few who claim to have all of the answers. I am certainly not one of them.