

34:32). Unfinished business is our worst business. Perpetual procrastination must yield to perceptive preparation. Today we have a little more time to bless others—time to be kinder, more compassionate, quicker to thank and slower to scold, more generous in sharing, more gracious in caring.

Then when our turn comes to pass through the doors of death, we can say as did Paul: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6-7).

We need not look upon death as an enemy. With our full understanding and preparation, faith supplants fear. Hope displaces despair. The Lord said, "Fear not even unto death; for in this world your joy is not full, but in me your joy is full" (D&C 101:36). He bestowed this gift: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

As a special witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that He lives! I also testify that the veil of death is very thin. I know by experiences too sacred to

relate that those who have gone before are not strangers to leaders of this Church. To us and to you, our loved ones may be just as close as the next room—separated only by the doors of death.

With that assurance, brothers and sisters, love life! Cherish each moment as a blessing from God (see Mosiah 2:21). Live it well—even to your loftiest potential. Then the anticipation of death shall not hold you hostage. With the help of the Lord, your deeds and desires will qualify you to receive everlasting joy, glory, immortality, and eternal lives. For this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Council of the Twelve has just spoken to us.

We shall now hear from Elder M. Russell Ballard, also a member of the Council of the Twelve. He will be followed by Sister Ardeth G. Kapp, released yesterday as General President of the Young Women.

Elder M. Russell Ballard

Sacrifices of pioneers

Last October we listened to many inspired conference messages. In his Sunday morning address, President Gordon B. Hinckley called to our attention some of the poignant experiences of our pioneer forefathers whose sacrifices helped them lay the foundation of the restored Church. Our hearts were softened and our spirits grew tender with emotion as we listened to him recount experiences of some of those hardy handcart pioneers.

The images engendered in my mind and heart have not left me. Again and again, I find my thoughts returning

to the high, snow-covered, windswept plains of Wyoming. In my mind's eye, I see the suffering of those faithful Saints and know that in their extremity, under circumstances hard for us today to conceive, many of them came to know God in a way that few people will ever understand.

Margaret McNeil Ballard

Many of us are descendants of hardy pioneers, and we feel grateful and inspired by their faith-promoting examples of sacrifice. My great-grandmother Margaret McNeil Ballard recorded in her journal a pioneer expe-

rience of sacrifice that occurred when she was between nine and eleven years of age. She wrote:

"After landing we planned to go west to Utah with the Martin and Wiley handcart companies; but Elder Franklin D. Richards counseled my father not to go with them. Afterwards, we were very thankful because of the great suffering, privation and cold weather to which these people were subjected. There were many of the company who were frozen that year on their journey. . . .

"The company we were assigned to had gone on ahead and as my mother was anxious for me to go with them she strapped my little brother James on my back with a shawl. He was only four years old and . . . quite sick with the measles; but I took him since my mother had all she could do to care for the other children. I hurried and caught up with the company, traveling with them all day. That night a kind lady helped me take my brother off my back. I sat up and held him on my lap with the shawl wrapped around him, alone, all night. He was a little better in the morning. The people in the camp were very good to us and gave us a little fried bacon and some bread for breakfast.

"We traveled this way for about a week, before my brother and I were united with our family again."

This brief episode in Great-grandmother's life teaches me that our pioneer ancestors gave everything, even their lives, for their faith, for the building of the kingdom of God when the Church was in its infancy. It teaches also that they helped, nourished, and strengthened each other in their extremity and shared unstintingly. Their material means, such as food, clothing, and shelter, were meager, but their love for one another and their devotion to their Lord and to the gospel were boundless.

Our sacrifices

Our commitment to the kingdom should match that of our faithful ancestors even though our sacrifices are different. They were driven from comfortable homes and compelled to journey one thousand miles by ox-drawn wagon and handcart to reestablish their families, homes, and Church in safety. Our sacrifices may be more subtle but no less demanding. Instead of physical deprivation and hardship, we face the challenge of remaining true and faithful to gospel principles amidst such evil and destructive forces as dishonesty, corruption, drug and alcohol misuse, and disease often caused by sexual promiscuity. Also, we find ourselves in combat daily with immorality in all of its many forms. Pornography and violence, often portrayed in insidious television shows, movies, and videos, are running rampant. Hate and envy, greed and selfishness are all about us, and families are disintegrating at an ever-increasing pace. In the midst of all of this, my brothers and sisters, we must never forget the source of our abundant blessings.

Sacrifices for a ward building

I recall in my own ministry joining with members of the Holladay Seventh Ward in the spring of 1956 as we gathered on the hillside near Mount Olympus. Under the direction of our stake president, G. Carlos Smith, we broke ground for the construction of a new ward building. At the time the ward was created, we had a total of 373 members. As I recall, more than half of them were under the age of twelve. I served as second counselor to Bishop William Partridge. Under his leadership this little band of people proceeded immediately to build a three-phase ward building.

The ward was divided in 1958, and I was named bishop of the Holladay

Twelfth Ward. In those days, local members paid 50 percent of the cost of constructing a building. One of the most important leadership experiences in my life came several weeks before the announced dedication of the building. Our ward of young families, who were struggling to make ends meet, needed to raise the final \$30,000 required to pay our share of the cost. I fasted and prayed, asking for help from Heavenly Father to know what I should say to our ward members regarding this obligation. We already had pressed them very hard, and they had willingly contributed money and personal labor beyond anything I believed possible. But still we needed to raise the last \$30,000.

As the brethren gathered for priesthood meeting, I was impressed to read to them the testimony my Grandfather Ballard bore to the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve on January 7, 1919, the day he was ordained an Apostle. I quote just a small portion of his testimony.

"I know, as I know that I live, that this is God's work and that you are His servants. . . . I remember one testimony, among the many testimonies which I have received. . . . Two years ago, about this time, I had been on the Fort Peck Reservation for several days with the brethren, solving the problems connected with our work among the Lamanites. Many questions arose that we had to settle. There was no precedent for us to follow, and we just had to go to the Lord and tell Him our troubles, and get inspiration and help from Him. On this occasion I had sought the Lord, under such circumstances, and that night I received a wonderful manifestation and impression which has never left me. I was carried to this place—into this room. I saw myself here with you. I was told there was another privilege that was to be mine; and I was led into a room

where I was informed I was to meet someone. As I entered the room I saw, seated on a raised platform, the most glorious being I have ever conceived of, and was taken forward to be introduced to Him. As I approached He smiled, called my name, and stretched out His hands toward me. If I live to be a million years old I shall never forget that smile. He put His arms around me and kissed me, as He took me into His bosom, and He blessed me until my whole being was thrilled. As He finished I fell at His feet, and there saw the marks of the nails; and as I kissed them, with deep joy swelling through my whole being, I felt that I was in heaven indeed. The feeling that came to my heart then was: Oh! if I could live worthy, though it would require four-score years, so that in the end when I have finished I could go into His presence and receive the feeling that I *then* had in His presence, I would give everything that I am or ever hope to be!" (*Melvin J. Ballard—Crusader for Righteousness* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], pp. 65–66).

The Spirit of the Lord touched our hearts. Very little else was said because this small group of faithful people also knew in their own way that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He is our Savior and our Redeemer. We all knew that with greater faith in Him, we could reach our goal. During that same day, family after family came to my office with money, making personal sacrifices that were far beyond what I, the bishop, would ever have asked of them. By eight o'clock Sunday evening, the ward clerk had written receipts for a little more than \$30,000.

Sacrifice truly brought forth the blessings of heaven to the members of our ward. Never have I lived among people who were more united, more caring, more concerned for one another than these ward members were when making their greatest sacrifice. In

the midst of this effort, the sick of our ward were healed through priesthood blessings. The youth committed to live righteously. The young men set their goals to be fully worthy to serve missions, and most of them did; and the young women resolved to settle for nothing but a worthy temple marriage. Sisters of the Relief Society found great joy in rendering compassionate service to others, and home teaching and visiting teaching were completed every month in the spirit of joy and service. In the midst of our greatest sacrifice, our ward members became bonded together in the true spirit of the gospel of love and service.

The Lord's example of sacrifice

Sacrifice is a demonstration of pure love. The degree of our love for the Lord, for the gospel, and for our fellowmen can be measured by what we are willing to sacrifice for them. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ manifested the supreme example of this love. His life and ministry established a pattern for us to follow. His divine mission was culminated in a supreme act of love as He allowed His life to be sacrificed for us. Having power over life and death, He chose to submit himself to pain, ridicule, and suffering, and offered His life as a ransom for our sins. Because of His love, He suffered both body and spirit to a degree beyond our comprehension and took upon Himself our sins if we repent. Through His personal sacrifice, He provided a way for us to have our sins forgiven and, through Him, to find our way back into the presence of our Heavenly Father.

The sacrifice he requires of us is "a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20), which can lead us to repentance. When we consider His example, the demands made upon our time or means are slight in comparison.

We should, therefore, give gladly and count it as a blessing and an opportunity.

Do not lose the spirit of sacrifice

I realize that today many faithful members of the Church are sacrificing a great deal to support sons and daughters serving on missions and render other great service in many ways. As I have pondered these simple acts of faith, I have asked myself, however, how many of us really measure up to our potential in living the spirit of the law of sacrifice?

Church members today have been blessed greatly to have some of our financial burdens lifted. Faithful payment of tithes that are administered carefully now provides funds for constructing our buildings, paying for utilities, and meeting many other obligations that formerly necessitated additional contributions. We must realize that decreasing these needs for financial contributions gives birth to enlarged opportunities for us to live a higher law. By this I mean that on our own initiative we can find ways to extend ourselves in helping others and contributing to the building of the Lord's kingdom. The Lord has instructed us that we "should be anxiously engaged in a good cause, and do many things of [our] own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness; For the power is in [us], wherein [we] are agents unto [ourselves]" (D&C 58:27-28).

My brothers and sisters, we must not lose the spirit of sacrifice demonstrated by the handcart pioneers. Some of the Lord's choicest blessings await those who practice this eternal principle through extending themselves in service to God and to their fellowmen. The sacrificing spirit and the happiness that come through service to others can bring peace and joy even amid trials.

Teach sacrifice in every home

The principle of sacrifice should be taught in every Latter-day Saint home and should be practiced in many simple yet important ways. We can do this by setting an example of reverence that will bring the true spirit of worship into our meetings and by guarding against murmuring and complaining about the challenges of the Sunday worship schedule. We can contribute a generous fast offering, find joy in supporting missionaries, and pay an honest tithing. We can accept Church callings and serve with a happy and grateful heart, do temple work regularly, offer family and personal daily prayers, and teach one another each week in well-planned family home evenings. Both younger members and those who are older can prepare early and make themselves worthy to accept calls to serve as missionaries. We all can be good neighbors and can take care of widows, the poor, and the less fortunate. We can reach out to others in our service as home and visiting teachers. Brethren, we must be clean and worthy to bless others with the priesthood we hold.

Today we are not called to pull handcarts through the snow-swept

plains of Wyoming. However, we are called to live, foster, and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is our privilege to invest our means and our time to bless others. Each one of us must do all we can to preserve our Latter-day Saint way of life. A vital part of this preservation is a willingness to set aside personal desires and replace them with unselfish sacrifice for others.

God bless you, brothers and sisters, to know as I know that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that being a member of His Church, the only true and living Church, is never a burden but always a great blessing. That we may be grateful for this blessing I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Monson

We have just heard from Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Council of the Twelve.

Sister Ardeth G. Kapp, who was released yesterday as Young Women General President, will now address us. She will be followed by Sister Janette C. Hales, sustained yesterday as General President of the Young Women.

Ardeth G. Kapp

My dear brothers and sisters, today my heart is filled with joy because of the deep love and respect I feel for the newly called Young Women Presidency. I also feel heartfelt gratitude for my counselors and the Young Women board members I have served with. We rejoice in the opportunities that have come through our callings. I'm grateful to my eternal companion, who has been my constant support.

A mighty force for righteousness

As we have inquired of the Lord in earnest prayer and sought Him diligently, we have felt His Spirit and witnessed His guiding hand. I bear testimony of the wisdom, inspiration, and guidance of our priesthood leaders directing this great work.

At the time of my calling, President Hinckley spoke of this as a time when the young women of the Church would become a mighty force for