

“ . . . And there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man *did deal justly* one with another.

“And they had all things common among them; therefore there were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they *were all made free*. . . .

“ . . . And surely there could not be a *happier people* among all the people

who had been created by the hand of God” (4 Nephi 1:1–3, 16; italics added).

Yes, “by the power of his word did they cause prisons to tumble” (Mormon 8:24). May we live our lives so we will all be free with no prisons for ourselves or others, only a magnificent obsession filled with freedoms and blessings ahead, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Bishop Glenn L. Pace

Strengthening personal testimonies

When I was young I was overly dependent on my older sister. For example, I was a fussy eater, and when we went to visit our grandparents I was constantly faced with being offered food I didn't like. To minimize my embarrassment, when the plate was passed to me, I would turn to my sister and ask, “Collene, do I like this?”

If it was familiar and she knew I didn't like it, she would say, “No, he doesn't like that.”

I could then say to Grandma, “She's right; I don't like it.”

If it was something we hadn't eaten before, she would say, “Just a minute,” and taste it, and then tell me if I liked it or not. If she said I didn't like it, no amount of coaxing could get me to eat it.

I know it is past time for me to rely on my own taste buds and stop denying myself healthy food just because my sister told me I didn't like it.

On a much more serious note, I believe the time has come for all of us to feast on the fruit of our own testimonies as opposed to the testimony of another person. The testimony of which I speak is much deeper than knowing the Church is true. We need to progress to the point of knowing we are true to the Church. We also need to increase our capacity to receive personal revelation. It is one thing to receive a witness that

Joseph Smith saw God and Christ. It is quite another to have spiritual self-confidence in your ability to receive the revelation to which you are entitled.

The train of the Church

Many of us take the blessings of the gospel for granted. It is as if we are passengers on the train of the Church, which has been moving forward gradually and methodically. Sometimes we have looked out the window and thought, “That looks kind of fun out there. This train is so restrictive.” So we have jumped off and gone and played in the woods for a while. Sooner or later we find it isn't as much fun as Lucifer makes it appear, or we get critically injured, so we work our way back to the tracks and see the train ahead. With a determined sprint we catch up to it, breathlessly wipe the perspiration from our foreheads, and thank the Lord for repentance.

While on the train we can see the world and some of our own members outside laughing and having a great time. They taunt us and coax us to get off. Some throw logs and rocks on the tracks to try and derail it. Other members run alongside the tracks, and while they may never go play in the woods, they just can't seem to get on the train. Others try to run ahead and too often take the wrong turn.

I would propose that the luxury of getting on and off the train as we please is fading. The speed of the train is increasing. The woods are getting much too dangerous, and the fog and darkness are moving in.

Time for spiritual revival

Although our detractors might as well “stretch forth [their] puny arm[s] to stop the Missouri river in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream” (D&C 121:33) as try to derail this train, they are occasionally successful in coaxing individuals off. With all the prophecies we have seen fulfilled, what great event are we awaiting prior to saying, “Count me in”? What more do we need to see or experience before we get on the train and stay on it until we reach our destination? It is time for a spiritual revival. It is time to dig down deep within ourselves and rekindle our own light.

President Joseph F. Smith said, “One fault to be avoided by the Saints, young and old, is the tendency to live on borrowed light [and] to permit . . . the light within them to be reflected, rather than original” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1939], p. 87).

Storms of disaster and disobedience

The whole world seems to be in commotion. Today’s news is filled with accounts of large-scale famine, civil unrest, and natural disasters. Even more devastating in the long run is the spiritually destructive hurricane of disobedience to God’s commandments that is engulfing the world. This horrible storm is blowing the moral fiber out of the nations of the earth and leaving the land in moral desolation. Many people seem to be oblivious to this hurricane and have become so desensitized they don’t even feel a breeze.

We are following a cycle which was repeated over and over again in the Book of Mormon. As the Lord tells us, “In the day of their peace they esteemed lightly my counsel; but, in the day of their trouble, of necessity they feel after me” (D&C 101:8).

We shouldn’t be too surprised, therefore, that the Lord is allowing some wake-up calls to jar us loose from apathy just as he has done in previous dispensations. In the book of Helaman, Nephi said, “And thus we see that except the Lord doth chasten his people with many afflictions, . . . they will not remember him” (Helaman 12:3).

In our dispensation the Lord has said, “And my people must needs be chastened until they learn obedience, if it must needs be, by the things which they suffer” (D&C 105:6).

Prepare by learning obedience

To some, the events unfolding in the world today are frightening. This is not a time to panic, but it is definitely a time to prepare. What can we do to better prepare ourselves for that which is at our doorstep? It is simple. We need to get back to basics and “learn obedience.” When we are obedient, we follow the first principles of the gospel and place our faith in our Lord and Savior; we repent of our sins; we are baptized and receive the Holy Ghost to guide us. We read and ponder the scriptures, pray for direction in our lives, and look for ways to help others who are going through difficult times. We share the gospel with people living on earth and make it possible for saving ordinances to be performed for those who have passed beyond the veil.

During this conference and on many other occasions we will be taught by the Lord’s anointed servants. These prophets, seers, and revelators receive revelation relative to the kingdom to which their mantle entitles them. We follow the Brethren. Finally, we pre-

pare ourselves to receive an endowment in the temple. If we remain faithful, this endowment literally gives us additional power to overcome the sins of the world and "stand in holy places" (D&C 45:32).

I make a special appeal to the youth. You will remain much safer and infinitely happier if you will place your energy into current obedience rather than saving it for future repentance. When we are obedient, we establish a base from which the challenges of the future can be addressed.

Golden moments of adversity

In spite of our obedience, trials and tribulations will come our way. Disasters and tribulation are not always for the punishment of the wicked, but often for the sanctification of the righteous. We admire the early members of the Church for their faithfulness through their numerous trials. It is interesting to contemplate whether they succeeded in facing their obstacles because of their spirituality or whether they were spiritual because of the obstacles they faced.

Into each of our lives come golden moments of adversity. This painful friend breaks our hearts, drops us to our knees, and makes us realize we are nothing without our Lord and Savior. This friend makes us plead all the night long for reassurance and into the next day and sometimes for weeks and months. But ultimately, just as surely as the day follows the night, as we remain true and faithful, this strange friend, adversity, leads us straight into the outstretched arms of the Savior.

I have tried to understand why we must experience tribulation before we can experience the ultimate communication. It seems there is an intense concentration which must be obtained before our pleadings reach our Father in Heaven and, perhaps even more

importantly, before He can get through to us. Sometimes we must be straining very hard to hear the still small voice. Before we can be taught things hidden from the world, we must be on a spiritual frequency which is out of this world. Adversity can help fine-tune this frequency. Even the Savior communicated more intensely with our Father in Heaven when he was in agony. When the Lord was in Gethsemane, Luke recorded, "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44).

Being valiant in our testimonies

The challenge for each of us, in order to prevent having to receive constant wake-up calls, is to remain obedient once we have turned upward. As the storm clears, it is possible to stay in tune by being valiant in our testimonies. We can then enjoy reprieves—sometimes long ones—and have a taste of heaven on earth. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be in the plan to have a whole lifetime of bliss if our goal is increased spirituality and perfection.

It is my hope that each of us will experience a spiritual revival as we become more obedient. This increased depth of spirituality will help give us the perspective we need to face today's adversities and the strength we need for tomorrow. While the world is in commotion, the kingdom is intact. We are living in the greatest and most exciting part of our dispensation since the Restoration itself. We plead with everyone to become active participants in building the kingdom. This is the hour of our opportunity, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

Elder James M. Paramore and Bishop Glenn L. Pace have just spoken to us.