

Covenants provide foundation

In the midst of a troubling world, the foundations I rely on come by my covenants with the Lord. They are indeed like sapphires and are treasures beyond price. Through them I have an eternal link to my loved ones and to God. They are the restored principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are available to righteous women and men alike through the power of the holy priesthood of God. They include baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the sacrament, and temple covenants. These are the ways given to us and freely chosen by us to vouchsafe our eternal lives.

"And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters" (Mosiah 5:7).

We are, then, because of his great love and because of our desire to be guided by his light, part of the family of Christ. Because of our covenants, we

have protection from loneliness and alienation. Because of our relationship with him, we can reflect light and tenderness to one another and we can possess our own souls eternally.

I testify of the great blessing it is to know these things. I am humbly grateful for scriptural testaments and for my knowledge that Christ is alive and heads his church. I know he can be alive in each of us as we keep his commandments, and I say this humbly in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Henry B. Eyring, a new member of the Quorum of the Twelve, followed by Sister Aileen H. Clyde, second counselor in the general Relief Society presidency.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "Come, Come, Ye Saints." Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy will then address us.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder Eduardo Ayala

Isolated members in Peru keep the faith

Due to the nature of our calling as General Authorities, we are assigned to visit various nations, places, or groups. In some of these, there are risks and dangers. The varying circumstances under which these areas function frequently prevent us from reaching the places we have been assigned to visit.

On one occasion I received the assignment to visit a stake located in the beautiful mountains of the Peruvian highlands. This unit of the Church had not been visited by a General Authority for

more than two years because of the dangers involved in traveling there. After obtaining proper authorization and with the help of the mission president, we commenced the five-hour trip that took us to the beautiful Mantaro River Valley.

When we arrived at the stake center, the president and his counselors were waiting for us. Upon seeing us, their faces lit up with happiness and we joined in a strong, brotherly embrace. Some three years previous, two of our beloved missionaries had been killed in this city. After embracing the president close to my heart, trying to communicate to him all

my love, I asked, "Have you suffered greatly during this time in which we haven't been able to come?" He answered with his eyes filled with tears, "Yes, we have suffered greatly, but we have kept the faith." This simple phrase touched our hearts, and we could feel that the hand of the Lord had been with them in the difficult circumstances they had experienced as a people and as members of the Church.

During our meeting with them, we learned many things, one of which was how to keep the faith in areas such as these, far from large cities and far from the headquarters of the Church. In the things that we learned, we were able to distinguish at least five principles which aided them to overcome their difficulties.

They trusted in the Lord

First, they never stopped trusting in the Lord, and they placed all of their faith in him. This was the foundation for their assurance. They trusted in the fact that he would protect and guide them. The Lord has said, "If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me" (Moroni 7:33).

Occasionally in the midst of our desperation we seek other ways, other guides. But those who counsel us are not always prepared to help because they do not understand our spiritual needs. They are not prepared to give us the counsel and the revelation that we need in trying circumstances.

We have the great example of the sons of Mosiah, who endured so much adversity and so many trials. Because of the trust they had in the Lord, "the Lord did visit them with his Spirit and said unto them: Be comforted. And they were comforted. . . . Yet ye shall be patient in long-suffering and afflictions, that ye may show forth good examples unto them in me, and I will make an instru-

ment of thee in my hands unto the salvation of many souls" (Alma 17:10-11).

They prayed faithfully

Second, they remained faithful in prayer. Each member, whether adult, child, or adolescent, faithfully followed this holy practice each day, praying individually and as families with all of their faith. As we know, prayer is the means by which we communicate with our Heavenly Father. He listens to us because we are his children and he loves us, and he is anxious to bless us when we keep the commandments.

As the Savior instructed the Nephites, he taught them, "Pray in your families unto the Father, always in my name, that your wives and your children may be blessed" (3 Nephi 18:21). No one could have given them greater assurance that they would be heard by the Father than his own Son.

They studied the scriptures

Third, they never stopped studying the scriptures. In the scriptures they found faith to overcome fear, solutions to their problems, divine comfort from the Master, the loving counsel of the Father, and especially the assurance of being guided in righteousness toward eternal life. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). They lived this commandment even in the midst of all their difficulties. One of the Saints there said, "We have never been as close to the Lord as when we were reading the scriptures."

They implemented priesthood programs

Fourth, they implemented priesthood programs. Due to the fatal incident that had taken place there, it was necessary to remove full-time missionaries. In

order to make up for the help that was lost, it became necessary to organize the returned missionaries so that they could teach the gospel to those who wanted to hear it. References came in from member families. Home teaching increased. Nobody was overlooked. Just as they said, they had kept the faith.

They humbled themselves

Fifth, they humbled themselves before the Lord. They purified their lives; they repented; they tried to live together as Saints, sharing much of what they had, fasting when problems arose or when they were threatened.

These simple yet powerful principles enabled them to sustain themselves, to be preserved, to remain faithful and active as members of the Church in that area.

Courage to keep the faith

What wonderful teachings we are able to find in these distant and isolated villages, where frequently it is difficult to sustain a religion or to live the principles of the gospel. We would imagine that it is also difficult to sustain life there and to keep the faith. Only their confidence in God and their faith in Jesus Christ sustain them, move them, and purify them.

Keeping the faith must also be a challenge for those who are alone in the Church, for those whose families are not converted, for those who have lost a companion, a spouse, or a child. Great courage is needed in order to continue onward, but we always have comfort from on high.

Our pioneers did not complain; they did not deny the faith or turn back. It is difficult to conceive of the great loneliness of the people of the Church during those first years when they were a small group, the only Church members on all the face of the earth. They were

persecuted, humiliated, rejected, and some were killed. The faith which they developed in the Lord, in the face of so much adversity, made them strong and humble at the same time. It must have been very difficult to keep the faith when there was so much opposition, so much loneliness, so much anguish. It was a glorious time, a time of martyrs, a time in which to lay the foundation of a courageous and inspiring religion such as ours.

President Kimball said regarding this theme: "Suffering can make saints of people as they learn patience, long-suffering, and self-mastery. The sufferings of our Savior were part of his education" (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1972], p. 98).

How grateful we are for those who, with their simple example, allow us to follow without fainting, seeking to return to our Father. Perhaps isolation makes small and distant towns and villages stronger and more pure.

Prophets' loving influence

At the close of the conference in that stake, I assured the members that God loved them, that the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles were mindful of them, and that this was the reason we were there—to give them our testimony of the fact that they were part of the Church, that we had not forgotten them, and that we prayed for them. There was gratitude in their hearts, and again they smiled as humble members who had been comforted by the Spirit of the Lord.

As he gave the closing prayer in one of the conference sessions, a worthy elderly man, nearly eighty years of age, expressed well the ways in which they remember the prophets. In his prayer he said, "Heavenly Father, we give thee thanks for having sent one of thy servants here to the Mantaro Valley, where thy beloved servant, President Kimball, knelt down and blessed this land that

it would feed us and always provide us a livelihood.”

How fortunate and privileged we are to be today in the presence of the prophets of God and to receive their loving influence. Due to the worldwide growth of the Church, a large number of our good members have never had the privilege to be near one of these wonderful leaders at any time during their lives. But I testify to you that they love the General Authorities, that they are following their teachings, and that they await humbly and patiently the day in which they can be at the feet of the prophets.

Let us keep the faith

The conditions of peoples and of nations change due to progress in the world; nevertheless, in many such places, be it in the frosty mountain heights, in the warm valleys, at the rivers' edges, or in the desert places, wherever members of our church are found, there will always be those who live these basic principles, and by so doing they bless the rest of the people. Let us face our earthly challenges courageously in spite of where we live or whatever difficult circumstances we may be called to endure. Let us keep the faith.

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.

Seeing ourselves as Jesus sees us

As I express my appreciation for the privilege of being with you in this historic conference and for the opportunity to sustain our beloved prophet and his associates, I must also express gratitude—first, to the Lord for the opportunity to serve in this holy calling; and second, to all who have nurtured, tutored, and supported me. My family, particularly my wife, Sharon, has always been willing to provide what I have needed. Many

We are fortunate this day to be able to sustain a new prophet and his counselors, whom we love and support. In the coming days, in nearly all the nations of the earth, even in the most remote towns and villages, our members will also have the privilege of raising their hands joyfully to sustain them as we have done today.

Someday our journey here on the earth will end, and we will return to the presence of our Heavenly Father. I pray that on that day we may have the same courage and give the same testimony given by the Apostle Paul to Timothy: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7).

May the Lord bless us to continue being valiant, humble, and faithful. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Faust

We have just listened to Elder Eduardo Ayala of the Seventy.

Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr., who was sustained as a Seventy at October conference, will be our next speaker. He will be followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

friends and colleagues, both in and out of the Church, have tried to understand what this assignment means to me and have been most thoughtful and encouraging. The Brethren have been particularly patient and kind, and I will ever be grateful to those who have lovingly helped me through these many weeks of self-evaluation and adjustment.

During this recent process of self-examination, I confess I have wondered what others might think about this appointment which has come to me. I have