

## Elder Durrel A. Woolsey

### A strategy for war

I would like to speak to you today about a strategy for war. We sing the hymn "Onward, Christian Soldiers! Marching as to war" (*Hymns*, no. 246). Paul said, "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8). In the book of Revelation we are told of a war in heaven (see Revelation 12:7). What kind of battle? What kind of war?

The war is for the souls of men. The battle lines have been drawn since Adam: evil versus righteousness. In this the final dispensation and in preparation for the Millennium, the forces of evil have intensified and united under the powerful influences of Satan. On the opposite side of the line, the kingdom of God is clearly sounding the trumpet of righteousness as perhaps never before. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is on the offensive in the declaration of good to be good and evil to be evil.

### Satan's influence in the latter days

Isaiah prophesied of our time on this very subject when he said, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). Satan offers a strange mixture of just enough good to disguise the evil along his downward path to destruction, as described by Nephi, an ancient prophet, when he said:

"For behold, at that day shall he rage in the hearts of the children of men, and stir them up to anger against that which is good.

"And others will he pacify, and lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth

them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:20–21).

Satan does rage in the hearts of some. Many he will lull away into carnal security; others he flattereth, or he says there is no hell. He has lured and enlisted many followers with enticements of fame, riches, and power. He forges a Rembrandt-quality representation by calling evil good and good evil. He has confused many people, even nations and leaders, to the point of an immoral approach to moral issues.

Let me mention just three examples of voices that are ungodly and powerful among Satan's many proclamations. First, he says individual agency is justification for the destruction of a human life through abortion; second, same-gender intimate associations and even marriages are acceptable; and third, chastity and fidelity are old-fashioned and narrow-minded—to be sexually active with free expression is acceptable.

At this very moment, international heroes in sports, music, and movies not only live immoral lives but teach that immorality around the world through the powerful influence of the media. They are idolized and accepted by millions worldwide. The world in general seems to have lapsed into a coma of unrighteousness, leaving God-given and time-honored moral values and principles behind.

### The need for Christ-centered living

The Brethren have said to push the world back. We are many more than the ten needed to save Sodom and Gomorrah. How will we fight this battle as it continues? The faithful Saints of God, with the undergirding of His holy priesthood, are the most powerful force on earth. We must hold fast to forceful proclamations from God regarding the sanctity of life, His eternal and never-

ending instruction to be chaste and pure. His loving counsel that families are ordained of God with a father, mother, and children to live together forever was not intended to be the exception but the rule. A return to Christ by an individual will bring peace of mind in place of turmoil, tranquillity to replace strife, courage and optimism in place of fear.

This Christ-centered way of living is not only for individuals but for families, entire governments, and nations, and will bring about similar results. For example, the individual or even a nation living a chaste and virtuous life has little to fear of the dread disease AIDS. Fatherless families created through strife and divorce would be virtually unknown.

### Ten symptoms of the descending path

As you survey your individual responsibility, where do you stand? There are symptoms or warnings of the descending path. Ten symptoms to be aware of might be:

- An increasing shortness of vision or an inability to see clearly things of a spiritual nature.

- An ever-increasing callousness to things of God.

- A hardening of the spiritual arteries—attention to spiritual needs moves from daily or weekly to monthly, then occasionally, then not at all.

- An increasing dependence upon a growing army of psychiatric specialists instead of priesthood, God, and self.

- An increasing independence from spiritual things.

- An increasing number of friends with lower moral standards.

- Quotes from talk shows instead of scriptures.

- Raised voices in place of subdued tones.

- Verbal, even physical, abuse replacing a circle of love.

- Gradual acceptance of evil—not all at once, but a little bit at a time.

### The prescription for victory

Some are more familiar with the location of sand traps on the golf course or a good tennis backhand than with the location of lifesaving scriptures. Many search for happiness in current financial pages instead of the inspired counsel from prophets. I have observed that the great majority of people the world over waste and wear out their lives making major commitments of time and effort toward projects that have absolutely no exalting benefits yet have eternal consequences.

We must be involved in a good and a righteous cause. We must see through the glass clearly, with an objective look at ourselves and families so as not to be caught in the second great calamitous worldwide flood that is even now all around us. It has been prophesied that the faithful will win this great war, that they will triumphantly rise up to meet the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of His second coming. The prescription for this victory includes daily individual and family prayers with a family home evening at least weekly. You may say, "I don't have time." Brothers and sisters, you simply cannot afford not to take the time. It is amazing how much time suddenly becomes available with the television off. This prescription continues the same as it has always been—keep the commandments; follow the prophets; read, understand, and even ponder the scriptures.

I testify that God lives, that His Son, Jesus Christ, has brought to pass the reality of the plan of redemption. Because of Him and His loving atonement, those who desire will win the war and be together with Him eternally. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### President Monson

We express our appreciation for the addresses we have just heard and for the

faithful service rendered by Elder Hans B. Ringger and Elder Durrel A. Woolsey, truly giants of the Lord.

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will now speak to us.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Perfection pending

If I were to ask which of the Lord's commandments is most difficult to keep, many of us might cite Matthew 5:48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."<sup>1</sup>

Keeping this commandment can be a concern because each of us is far from perfect, both spiritually and temporally. Reminders come repeatedly. We may lock keys inside the car or even forget where the car is parked. And not infrequently we walk intently from one part of the house to another, only to forget the reason for the errand.

When comparing one's personal performance with the supreme standard of the Lord's expectation, the reality of imperfection can at times be depressing. My heart goes out to conscientious Saints who, because of their shortcomings, allow feelings of depression to rob them of happiness in life.

We all need to remember: men are that they might have joy—not guilt trips!<sup>2</sup> We also need to remember that the Lord gives no commandments that are impossible to obey. But sometimes we fail to comprehend them fully.

Our understanding of perfection might be aided if we classify it into two categories. The first could pertain uniquely to this life—*mortal* perfection. The second category could pertain uniquely to the next life—*immortal* or *eternal* perfection.

### Mortal perfection

In this life certain actions can be perfected. A baseball pitcher can throw a no-hit, no-run ball game. A surgeon can

perform an operation without an error. A musician can render a selection without a mistake. One can likewise achieve perfection in being punctual, paying tithing, keeping the Word of Wisdom, and so on. The enormous effort required to attain such self-mastery is rewarded with a deep sense of satisfaction. More importantly, spiritual attainments in mortality accompany us into eternity.<sup>3</sup>

James gave a practical standard by which mortal perfection could be measured. He said, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a *perfect* man."<sup>4</sup>

Scriptures have described Noah, Seth, and Job as *perfect* men.<sup>5</sup> No doubt the same term might apply to a large number of faithful disciples in various dispensations. Alma said that "there were many, exceedingly great many,"<sup>6</sup> who were pure before the Lord.

This does not mean that these people never made mistakes or never had need of correction. The process of perfection includes challenges to overcome and steps to repentance that may be very painful.<sup>7</sup> There is a proper place for chastisement in the molding of character, for we know that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."<sup>8</sup>

Mortal perfection can be achieved as we try to perform every duty, keep every law, and strive to be as perfect in our sphere as our Heavenly Father is in His. If we do the best we can, the Lord will bless us according to our deeds and the desires of our hearts.<sup>9</sup>

### Eternal perfection

But Jesus asked for more than mortal perfection. The moment He uttered the words "even as your Father which is