

who through transgression and faithless living are in despair over eternal things.

When this sacred witness comes, our love for Him will increase without bounds; our desire to know of Him will increase. We will sorrow as we read such words as King Benjamin's prophecy of Him:

"And lo, he shall suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.

"And he shall be called Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of heaven and earth, the Creator of all things from the beginning" (Mosiah 3:7-8).

#### **Our gratitude for Christ will overflow**

Our hearts will overflow with gratitude for His sacrifice in our behalf. This doctrine of personal revelation is not new. This eternal principle has been taught in ages past:

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

"And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

"And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto

thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 16:13-17).

#### **"All things bear record of me"**

After this sacred witness comes, you will see His hand in a thousand things.

"And behold, all things have their likeness, and all things are created and made to bear record of me, both things which are temporal, and things which are spiritual; things which are in the heavens above, and things which are on the earth, and things which are in the earth, and things which are under the earth, both above and beneath: all things bear record of me" (Moses 6:63).

We will find great joy in contemplating His life, and we will shortly realize that in truth all things do bear witness of Him. Furthermore, in the midst of our trials and challenges, we will find peace, knowing that in the end it will be all right. We will find serenity in the face of affliction. We will find this serenity in life even as chaos swirls around us.

Such is the power of a testimony and witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, the very Savior of the world.

I bear witness of Him. I witness that He lived, He died, He came forth from the tomb a resurrected being, and He has gifted us with resurrection and a promise of an eternal life of joy and fulfillment through obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel as revealed anew in our day through living prophets.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

#### **Personal preparation for temple blessings**

Under President Gordon B. Hinckley's inspired direction, temples are now

more accessible than ever. Inscribed on each temple are the words "Holiness to the Lord."<sup>1</sup> That statement designates both the temple and its purposes as holy.

Those who enter the temple are also to bear the attribute of holiness.<sup>2</sup> It may be easier to ascribe holiness to a building than it is to a people. We can acquire holiness only by enduring and persistent personal effort. Through the ages, servants of the Lord have warned against unholiness. Jacob, brother of Nephi, wrote, "I would speak unto you of holiness; but as ye are not holy, and ye look upon me as a teacher, [I] must . . . teach you the consequences of sin."<sup>3</sup>

Now I feel that same sense of responsibility to teach. As temples are prepared for our members, our members need to prepare for the temple.

### The temple

The temple is the house of the Lord. The basis for every temple ordinance and covenant—the heart of the plan of salvation—is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Every activity, every lesson, all we do in the Church points to the Lord and His holy house. Our efforts to proclaim the gospel, perfect the Saints, and redeem the dead all lead to the temple. Each holy temple stands as a symbol of our membership in the Church,<sup>4</sup> as a sign of our faith in life after death, and as a sacred step toward eternal glory for us and our families.

President Hinckley said that "these unique and wonderful buildings, and the ordinances administered therein, represent the ultimate in our worship. These ordinances become the most profound expressions of our theology."<sup>5</sup>

To enter the temple is a tremendous blessing. But first we must be worthy. We should not be rushed. We cannot cut corners of preparation and risk the breaking of covenants we were not prepared to make. That would be worse than not making them at all.

### The endowment

In the temple we receive an endowment, which is, literally speaking, a gift.

In receiving this gift, we should understand its significance and the importance of keeping sacred covenants. Each temple ordinance "is not just a ritual to go through, it is an act of solemn promising."<sup>6</sup>

The temple endowment was given by revelation. Thus, it is best understood by revelation, prayerfully sought with a sincere heart.<sup>7</sup> President Brigham Young said, "Your endowment is, to receive all those ordinances in the house of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father . . . and gain your eternal exaltation."<sup>8</sup>

### Sealing authority

In preparing to receive the endowment and other ordinances of the temple, we should understand the sealing authority of the priesthood. Jesus referred to this authority long ago when He taught His Apostles, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."<sup>9</sup> That same authority has been restored in these latter days. Just as priesthood is eternal—without beginning or end—so is the effect of priesthood ordinances that bind families together forever.

Temple ordinances, covenants, endowments, and sealings enable individuals to be reconciled with the Lord and families to be sealed beyond the veil of death. Obedience to temple covenants qualifies us for eternal life, the greatest gift of God to man.<sup>10</sup> Eternal life is more than immortality. Eternal life is exaltation in the highest heaven—the kind of life that God lives.

### Temple recommend

Preparation also includes qualification for a temple recommend. Our Redeemer requires that His temples be protected from desecration. No unclean thing may enter His hallowed house.<sup>11</sup> Yet anyone is welcome who prepares well.

Each person applying for a recommend will be interviewed by a judge in Israel—the bishop—and by a stake president.<sup>12</sup> They hold keys of priesthood authority and the responsibility to help us know when our preparation and timing are appropriate to enter the temple. Their interviews will assess several vital issues. They will ask if we obey the law of tithing, if we keep the Word of Wisdom, and if we sustain the authorities of the Church. They will ask if we are honest, if we are morally clean, and if we honor the power of procreation as a sacred trust from our Creator.

Why are these issues so crucial? Because they are spiritual separators. They help determine if we truly live as children of the covenant,<sup>13</sup> able to resist temptation from servants of sin.<sup>14</sup> These interviews help to discern if we are willing to live in accord with the will of the true and living God or if our hearts are still set “upon riches and . . . vain things of the world.”<sup>15</sup>

Such requirements are not difficult to understand. Because the temple is the house of the Lord, standards for admission are set by Him. One enters as His guest. To hold a temple recommend is a priceless privilege and a tangible sign of obedience to God and His prophets.<sup>16</sup>

### Physical preparation for the temple

One prepares physically for the temple by dressing properly. It is not a place for casual attire. “We should dress in such a way that we might comfortably attend a sacrament meeting or a gathering that is proper and dignified.”<sup>17</sup>

Within the temple, all are dressed in spotless white to remind us that God is to have a pure people.<sup>18</sup> Nationality, language, and position in the Church are of secondary significance. In that democracy of dress, all sit side by side and are considered equal in the eyes of our Maker.<sup>19</sup>

Brides and grooms enter the temple to be married for time and all eternity.

There brides wear white dresses—long sleeved, modest in design and fabric, and free of elaborate ornamentation. Grooms also dress in white. And brethren who come to witness weddings do not wear tuxedos.

Wearing the temple garment has deep symbolic significance. It represents a continuing commitment.<sup>20</sup> Just as the Savior exemplified the need to endure to the end, we wear the garment faithfully as part of the enduring armor of God.<sup>21</sup> Thus we demonstrate our faith in Him and in His eternal covenants with us.<sup>22</sup>

### Spiritual preparation for the temple

In addition to physical preparation, we prepare spiritually. Because the ordinances and covenants of the temple are sacred, we are under solemn obligation not to speak outside the temple of that which occurs in the temple. There are, however, some principles we can discuss.

Each temple is a house of learning.<sup>23</sup> There we are taught in the Master’s way.<sup>24</sup> His way differs from modes of others. His way is ancient and rich with symbolism. We can learn much by pondering the reality for which each symbol stands.<sup>25</sup> The teachings of the temple are beautifully simple and simply beautiful. They are understood by the humble, yet they can excite the intellect of the brightest minds.

Spiritual preparation is enhanced by study. I like to recommend that members going to the temple for the first time read short explanatory paragraphs in the Bible Dictionary, listed under seven topics:<sup>26</sup> “Anoint,”<sup>27</sup> “Atonement,”<sup>28</sup> “Christ,”<sup>29</sup> “Covenant,”<sup>30</sup> “Fall of Adam,”<sup>31</sup> “Sacrifices,”<sup>32</sup> and “Temple.”<sup>33</sup> Doing so will provide a firm foundation.

One may also read in the Old Testament<sup>34</sup> and the books of Moses and Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. Such a review of ancient scripture is even more enlightening *after* one is familiar with the temple endowment. Those books underscore the antiquity of temple work.<sup>35</sup>

With each ordinance is a covenant—a promise. A covenant made with God is not restrictive, but protective. Such a concept is not new. For example, if our water supply is not clean, we filter the water to screen out harmful ingredients. Divine covenants help us to filter out of our minds impurities that could harm us. When we choose to deny ourselves of all ungodliness,<sup>36</sup> we lose nothing of value and gain the glory of eternal life. Covenants do not hold us down; they elevate us beyond the limits of our own power and perspective.

### Eternal perspective

President Hinckley has explained that lofty perspective:

“There is a goal beyond the Resurrection,” he said. “That is exaltation in our Father’s kingdom. . . . It will begin with acceptance of him as our Eternal Father and of his Son as our living Redeemer. It will involve participation in various ordinances, each one important and necessary. The first of these is baptism by immersion in water, without which, according to the Savior, a man cannot enter into the kingdom of God. There must follow the birth of the Spirit, the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then in succession through the years will come, for men, ordination to the priesthood, followed by the blessings of the temple for both men and women who are worthy to enter therein. These temple blessings include our washings and anointings that we may be clean before the Lord. They include the . . . endowment of obligations and blessings that motivate us to behavior compatible with the principles of the gospel. They include the sealing ordinances by which that which is bound on earth is bound in heaven, providing for the continuity of the family.”<sup>37</sup>

I have learned that temple blessings are most meaningful when death takes a loved one away from the family circle. To know that the pain of separation is only temporary provides peace that passes

ordinary understanding.<sup>38</sup> Death cannot sever families sealed in the temple. They understand death as a necessary part of God’s great plan of happiness.<sup>39</sup>

Such perspective helps us maintain fidelity to covenants we have made. President Boyd K. Packer emphasized that “ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into [God’s] presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality.”<sup>40</sup>

Ordinances of the temple relate to *personal* progress and to the redemption of departed *ancestors* as well. “For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, . . . they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”<sup>41</sup> Service in their behalf provides repeated opportunities for temple worship. And that service deserves commitment to a planned schedule. By doing for others what they cannot do for themselves, we emulate the pattern of the Savior, who wrought the Atonement to bless the lives of other people.

One day we will meet our Maker and stand before Him at Judgment.<sup>42</sup> We will be judged according to our ordinances, covenants, deeds, and the desires of our hearts.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, in this world smitten with spiritual decay, can individuals prepared for temple blessings make a difference? Yes! Those Saints are “the covenant people of the Lord, . . . armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.”<sup>44</sup> Their example can lift the lives of all humankind. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See Exodus 28:36; 39:30; Psalm 93:5. Translated equivalents are used on temples in non-English-speaking localities.
2. See Exodus 19:5–6; Leviticus 19:1–2; Psalm 24:3–5; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Moroni 10:32–33; Doctrine and Covenants 20:69; 110:6–9; see also Bible Dictionary, “Holiness,” 703–4.

3. 2 Nephi 9:48.
4. See "Following the Master: Teachings of President Howard W. Hunter," *Ensign*, Apr. 1995, 21–22; Howard W. Hunter, "The Great Symbol of Our Membership," *Tambuli*, Nov. 1994, 3.
5. In Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53.
6. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 638.
7. See Moroni 10:4–5.
8. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe (1954), 416.
9. Matthew 16:19.
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:20; see also Isaiah 52:11; Alma 11:37; 3 Nephi 27:19.
12. Or the branch president and mission president.
13. See 3 Nephi 20:26; see also Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 1995, 41–42; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 32.
14. See Romans 6:17, 20; Doctrine and Covenants 121:17.
15. Alma 7:6.
16. President Hinckley said, "I urge our people everywhere, with all of the persuasiveness of which I am capable, to live worthy to hold a temple recommend, to secure one and regard it as a precious asset, and to make a greater effort to go to the house of the Lord and partake of the spirit and the blessings to be had therein" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 72; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 53).
17. Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (1980), 73.
18. See Neal A. Maxwell, "Not My Will, But Thine" (1988), 135; see also Doctrine and Covenants 100:16.
19. This reminds us that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34; see also Moroni 8:12).
20. The Lord assured that even though "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; . . . my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my people be removed" (Joseph Smith Translation, Isaiah 54:10). Surely we would not ever want knowingly to discard from us an emblem of His everlasting covenant.
21. See Ephesians 6:11–13; see also Alma 46:13, 21; Doctrine and Covenants 27:15.
22. In a letter dated October 10, 1988, the First Presidency wrote:  
 "Practices frequently observed among the members of the Church suggest that some members do not fully understand the covenant they make in the temple to wear the garment in accordance with the spirit of the holy endowment.  
 "Church members who have been clothed with the garment in the temple have made a covenant to wear it throughout their lives. This has been interpreted to mean that it is worn as underclothing both day and night. . . . The promise of protection and blessings is conditioned upon worthiness and faithfulness in keeping the covenant.  
 "The fundamental principle ought to be to wear the garment and not to find occasions to remove it. Thus, members should not remove either all or part of the garment to work in the yard or to lounge around the home in swimwear or immodest clothing. Nor should they remove it to participate in recreational activities that can reasonably be done with the garment worn properly beneath regular clothing. When the garment must be removed, such as for swimming, it should be restored as soon as possible.  
 "The principles of modesty and keeping the body appropriately covered are implicit in the covenant and should govern the nature of all clothing worn. Endowed members of the Church wear the garment as a reminder of the sacred covenants they have made with the Lord and also as a protection against temptation and evil. How it is worn is an outward expression of an inward commitment to follow the Savior."
23. Doctrine and Covenants 88:119; 109:8.
24. In fact, He *is* the way (see John 14:6).
25. See John A. Widtsoe, "Temple Worship," *Utah Genealogical and Historical Magazine*, Apr. 1921, 62.

26. Members of the Church who do not read English may find comparable terms in their language editions of the Guide to the Scriptures.
27. Page 609, paragraphs 1, 4.
28. Page 617, paragraphs 1–2.
29. Page 633, paragraphs 1–3.
30. Page 651, paragraphs 1–2.
31. Page 670, paragraphs 1–2.
32. Pages 765–66, paragraph 1.
33. Pages 780–81, paragraphs 1–3.
34. Chapters of special interest include Exodus 26–29, 39; Leviticus 8; 2 Samuel 12 (v. 20); 2 Chronicles 6–7; Isaiah 22; Ezekiel 16.
35. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:40–41.
36. See Moroni 10:32; Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26.
37. “Temples and Temple Work,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1982, 3.
38. See Philippians 4:7.
39. See Alma 42:8.
40. In Conference Report, Apr. 1987, 27; or *Ensign*, May 1987, 24.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
42. See 2 Nephi 9:41.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
44. 1 Nephi 14:14.

### President Faust

Elder L. Aldin Porter of the Presidency of the Seventy has just spoken to

us, followed by Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

We remind the brethren of the general priesthood meeting, which will convene here in the Conference Center this evening at 6:00 P.M. mountain standard time.

We call your attention to the need to move your clocks ahead one hour before retiring tonight because of the change to daylight saving time.

The nationwide Tabernacle Choir broadcast tomorrow morning will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. mountain daylight time. The Sunday morning session of conference will immediately follow.

As you leave the conference this afternoon, please be courteous, use caution, and obey the traffic rules.

We express gratitude to the combined choir from Ricks College for the beautiful music they have provided this afternoon. They will now sing “Come, Follow Me,” after which Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles will be our concluding speaker at this session. Following his remarks, the choir will sing “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder David R. Stone of the Seventy.

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The choir sang “Come, Follow Me.”

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## Elder L. Tom Perry

### An undervalued sweet roll

We all have life events that, when we recall them years later, acquire new and important meaning. When I was in junior high, I was honored by the school administration when I was asked to become a member of the student hall patrol. On the days we were assigned to be on hall patrol, we were instructed to bring our lunch to school and eat it together. It was always a special treat, and there was al-

ways a lot of competition to see whose mother had prepared the most desirable lunch. Often we traded lunch items among ourselves.

One day when I was assigned to be on hall patrol, I forgot to tell Mother that I needed a lunch until I was almost ready to leave for school. An expression of concern came over Mother's face when I requested a lunch. She told me that she had just used up her last loaf of bread for