

ing and thereby accessing the blessings of the astonishing Atonement, which He provided for us at such a stunning cost! (see John 16:14). So, brothers and sisters, given what Jesus *died for*, are we willing to *live with* the challenges allotted to us? (see Alma 29:4, 6). Trembling is sometimes both permissible and understandable.

There are many specific ways in which we can liken to ourselves these “essence” scriptures about Jesus and the Atonement, but all are covered under this conceptual canopy: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Matthew 11:29). In fact, there is no other way to learn deeply! (see 1 Nephi 19:23). The infinite Atonement is so vast and universal, but finally, it is so very personal! Mercifully, through the Atonement we can be forgiven and, very importantly, we can know that we have been forgiven—that final, joyous emancipation from error.

By utilizing the Atonement, we access the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which “fill-

eth with hope and perfect love” (Moroni 8:26). None of us can afford to be without that needed hope and love in the treks through our Sinais of circumstance!

Plow to the end of the furrow

Thus, within the discipleship allotted to us we are to overcome the world (see 1 John 5:3–4); to finish the work we personally have been given to do; to be able to partake of a bitter cup without becoming bitter; to experience pouring out our souls; to let our wills increasingly be swallowed up in the will of the Father; to acknowledge—tough though the tutoring trials are—that indeed “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good” (D&C 122:7); and to plow enduringly to the end of the furrow—all the while glorifying Him and using the matchless gifts He has given us, including, one day, all that He has (D&C 84:38).

In the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen!

Bishop Keith B. McMullin

An urgent voice of warning

To those who yearn for spiritual truth, some things become self-evident. I bear my witness of these things. God is in His heavens. We mortals are His spirit offspring. Jesus is our Redeemer. Joseph Smith was God’s prophet, and Gordon B. Hinckley is His prophet today. Revelations are pouring forth as in days of old. The kingdom of God, which is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is once more upon the earth.

Satan is real and is on the earth as well. He and his legions are wreaking havoc among the children of men. He speaks no truth, feels no love, promotes no good, and avows nothing but mayhem and destruction.

Therefore, I raise this day a “voice of warning.”¹ It is an urgent, sobering re-

minder and invitation to good men and women everywhere. Listen to these words of revelation received on November 1, 1831:

“Wherefore, I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments; . . .

“For I am no respecter of persons, and will that all men shall know that the day speedily cometh; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand, when peace shall be taken from the earth, and the devil shall have power over his own dominion.”²

Beware of worldly ways

The Lord speaks of calamity to befall the inhabitants of the earth. Calamities

come in different forms. From time to time the forces of nature convulse, and we are wrenched by their destructive powers.

Even more devastating, however, are the calamitous forces of evil which surfeit us continually. In accordance with the prophecy of 1831, peace has now been taken from the earth, and the devil has power over his dominion. His beguiling ways are mesmerizing the people. Temptation is on every hand. Crassness and wrangling have become a way of life. What was once considered awful is now considered tame; what at first titillates, soon captivates and then destroys.

This calamity of evil will continue to spread until "the whole world . . . groaneth . . . under the bondage of sin."³

Therefore, this "voice of warning":

- *Beware of worldly lusts.* They stimulate the senses but enslave the soul. Those caught in the web of sensuality find that it is not easily broken.

- *Beware of worldly wealth.* Its promises are enticing, but its happiness is a mirage. Wrote the Apostle Paul, "The love of money is the root of all evil."⁴

- *Beware of worldly preoccupation with self.* The highs are counterfeit; the lows are despairing. Love, kindness, personal fulfillment, and genuine self-worth are found in service to God and others, not in service to oneself.

The Church provides a safe harbor

In the midst of these perils, there is a safe harbor. From the revelation cited earlier comes this assurance:

"And also the Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst, and shall come down in judgment upon Idumea, or the world."⁵

There is safety in being a Saint. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ today are known as Latter-day Saints. In addition to being the Lord's designation of those who belong to His Church, this appellation also serves as His invitation to a better way of life.

This became clear to me some years ago when, as a young father, I needed to purchase some temple clothing. When I entered the store, my attention was drawn to a sign that read "For Latter-day Saints Only." The message jolted me. In my mind an argument ensued. "Why does it say 'For Latter-day Saints Only'?" I asked myself. "Why doesn't it say something like 'For Endowed Church Members'?" Why does it raise this issue of being a "Latter-day Saint"?

The years since have tempered my impetuous nature. That argumentative encounter of long ago has become a treasured, defining moment. The experience taught me that just being a member of this Church is not enough. Nor is merely going through the motions of membership sufficient in this day of cynicism and unbelief. The spirituality and vigilance of a saint are required.

Becoming the Lord's covenant people

Being saintly is to be good, pure, and upright. For such persons, virtues are not only declared but lived. For Latter-day Saints, the kingdom of God, or the Church, is not a byline; rather, it is the center and the substance of their lives. Home is "a bit of heaven,"⁶ not a hotel. The family is not merely a societal or biological entity. It is the basic eternal unit in God's kingdom, wherein the gospel of Jesus Christ is taught and lived. Indeed, Latter-day Saints diligently strive to become a little better, a little kinder, a little nobler in the daily affairs of life.

The Lord sets forth the way in which such progress is made. Said He, "Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness."⁷

Holding to this course provides Latter-day Saints the means for avoiding the treacherous shoals of worldliness. Living this way enables members of the Church to become the covenant people of the Lord. For our time, we have the follow-

ing prophetic guidance from President Hinckley on how this can be done:

"We are a covenant people. I have had the feeling that if we could just encourage our people to live by three or four covenants everything else would take care of itself. . . .

"*The first of these is the covenant of the sacrament*, in which we take upon ourselves the name of the Savior and agree to keep His commandments with the promise in His covenant that He will bless us with His spirit. . . .

"*Second, the covenant of tithing*. . . . The promise . . . is that He will stay the destroyer and open the windows of heaven and pour down blessings that there will not be room enough to receive them. . . .

"*Three, the covenants of the temple*: Sacrifice, the willingness to sacrifice for this the Lord's work—and inherent in that law of sacrifice is the very essence of the Atonement. . . . Consecration, which is associated with it, a willingness to give everything, if need be, to help in the on-rolling of this great work. And a covenant of love and loyalty one to another in the bonds of marriage, fidelity, chastity, morality.

"*If our people could only learn to live by these covenants, everything else would take care of itself, I am satisfied.*"⁸

Covenants help us resist worldly ways

Worldly lusts lose their allure as the holy sacrament assumes its proper place in our lives. This covenant enables the faithful to keep themselves "unspotted from the world."⁹

Worldly wealth loses its peril through conscientious adherence to the Lord's tithe. Returning to Him a tithe of all He provides engenders in the giver a love of God above all else. It introduces the obedient to the higher law of giving without command. The fast and fast offerings are embraced, and power comes to loose the bands of wickedness, lift heavy burdens,

and strengthen family ties.¹⁰ The covenant of tithing weans the faithful from the love of money and its attendant trappings.

Worldly preoccupation with self surrenders to sacrifice, consecration, and the other holy covenants of the temple. As the Redeemer of the world gave all that we might be saved, these covenants allow us to give our all in the accomplishment of Heavenly Father's purposes for His children.

And so, fear not. The things deemed weak by the world overthrow evils that appear so mighty and strong. Righteous men speak in the name of God the Lord. Faith increases in the earth. The everlasting covenants blossom in the lives of Latter-day Saints. The fulness of Christ's gospel is proclaimed by precept and example unto the ends of the world. And the Lord's covenant people prepare this earth for His Second Coming.¹¹ This is our duty. May the Lord sustain us in it by my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 1:4.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 1:17, 35.
3. Doctrine and Covenants 84:49.
4. 1 Timothy 6:10.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 1:36.
6. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 5; or *Improvement Era*, June 1964, 520.
7. Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38; see Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*.
8. *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* (1997), 146–47; italics added.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9; see also verses 10, 12–13.
10. See Isaiah 58:6–11.
11. See Doctrine and Covenants 1:19–23.

The choir and congregation sang "Redeemer of Israel."
