

## But We Heeded Them Not

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(1 Nephi 8:33)

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Covenants and ordinances point us to and help us always remember our connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as we progress along the covenant path.

My wife, Susan, our three sons and their wives, all of our grandchildren, and Elder Quentin L. Cook, my seatmate in the Quorum of the Twelve for almost 15 years, all readily will attest to the fact that I do not sing well. But in spite of my lack of vocal talent, I love to sing the hymns of the Restoration. The combination of inspired lyrics and majestic melodies helps me to learn essential gospel principles and stirs my soul.

One hymn that has blessed my life in remarkable ways is “Let Us All Press On.” Recently I have been pondering and learning about a specific phrase in the refrain of that hymn. “*We will heed not* what the wicked may say, but the Lord alone we will obey.”<sup>1</sup>

*We will heed not.*

As I sing “Let Us All Press On,” I often think of the people in Lehi’s vision pressing forward on the path that led to the tree of life who were not merely “clinging to”<sup>2</sup> but were “continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.”<sup>3</sup> Lehi described multitudes in the great and spacious building that were pointing “the finger of scorn at [him] and those ... partaking of the fruit.”<sup>4</sup> His response to the jeers and insults is magnificent and memorable: “*But we heeded them not.*”<sup>5</sup>

I pray that the Holy Ghost will bless and enlighten each of us as we consider together how we can be strengthened to “heed not” the evil influences and mocking voices of the contemporary world in which we live.

## Heed Not

The word *heed* suggests taking notice of or paying attention to someone or something. Thus, the lyrics of the hymn “Let Us All Press On” admonish us to make an affirmative decision to pay no attention to “what the wicked may say.” And

Lehi and the people with him who were partaking of the fruit of the tree provide a strong example of not paying attention to the mocking and scorn that so frequently come from the great and spacious building.

The doctrine of Christ written “with the Spirit of the living God ... in fleshy tables of [our hearts]”<sup>6</sup> increases our capacity to “heed not” the many distractions, taunts, and diversions in our fallen world. For example, faith focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ fortifies us with spiritual strength. Faith in the Redeemer is a principle of action and of power. As we act in accordance with the truths of His gospel, we are blessed with the spiritual capacity to press forward through the challenges of mortality while focusing on the joys the Savior offers to us. Truly, “if we do what’s right we have no need to fear, for the Lord, our helper, will ever be near.”<sup>7</sup>

## A Personal Connection through Covenants

Entering into sacred covenants and worthily receiving priesthood ordinances yoke us with and bind us to the Lord Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father.<sup>8</sup> This simply means that we trust in the Savior as our Advocate<sup>9</sup> and Mediator<sup>10</sup> and rely on His merits, mercy, and grace<sup>11</sup> during the journey of life. As we are steadfast in coming unto Christ and are yoked with Him, we receive the cleansing, healing, and strengthening blessings of His infinite and eternal Atonement.<sup>12</sup>

Living and loving covenant commitments creates a connection with the Lord that is deeply personal and spiritually powerful. As we honor the conditions of sacred covenants and ordinances, we gradually and incrementally are drawn closer to Him<sup>13</sup> and experience the impact of His divinity and living reality in our lives. Jesus then becomes much more than the central character in scripture stories; His example and teachings influence our every desire, thought, and action.

I frankly do not have the ability to describe adequately the precise nature and power of our covenant connection with the resurrected and living Son of God. But I witness that the connections with Him and Heavenly Father are real and are the ultimate sources of assurance, peace, joy, and the spiritual strength that enable us to “fear not, though the enemy deride.”<sup>14</sup> As covenant-making and covenant-keeping disciples of Jesus Christ, we can be blessed to take “courage, for the Lord is on our side”<sup>15</sup> and pay no attention to evil influences and secular scoffing.

As I visit with members of the Church around the world, I often ask them this question: what helps you to “heed not” worldly influences, mocking, and scorn? Their answers are most instructive.

Valiant members often highlight the importance of inviting the power of the Holy Ghost into their lives through meaningful scripture study, fervent prayer, and proper preparation to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. Also mentioned frequently are the spiritual support of faithful family members and trusted friends, the vital lessons learned through ministering and serving in the

Lord's restored Church, and the capacity to discern the absolute emptiness of anything in or coming from the great and spacious building.

I have noted in these member responses a particular pattern that is especially significant. First and foremost, these disciples have firm testimonies of Heavenly Father's plan of happiness and the role of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Savior. And second, their spiritual knowledge and conviction are individual, personal, and specific; they are not general and abstract. I listen to these devoted souls speak of covenants providing strength to overcome opposition and their connection with the living Lord supporting them through times both good and bad. To these individuals, Jesus Christ indeed is a personal Savior.

Gospel covenants and ordinances operate in our lives much like a compass. A compass is a device used to indicate the cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west for purposes of navigation and geographic orientation. In a similar way, our covenants and ordinances point us to and help us always remember our connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as we progress along the covenant path.

The cardinal direction for all of us in mortality is to come unto and be perfected in Christ.<sup>16</sup> Holy covenants and ordinances help us to keep our focus upon the Savior and strive, with His grace,<sup>17</sup> to become more like Him. Most assuredly, "an unseen [power] will aid me and you in the glorious cause of truth."<sup>18</sup>

## Holding Fast to the Iron Rod

Our covenant connection with God and Jesus Christ is the channel through which we can receive the capacity and strength to "heed not." And this bond is strengthened as we continually hold fast to the rod of iron. But as Nephi's brethren asked, "What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw ... ?

"And [Nephi] said unto them that it was the *word of God*; and whoso would hearken unto *the word of God*, and would *hold fast unto it*, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction."<sup>19</sup>

Please note that the ability to resist the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary is promised to those individuals who "hold fast to" rather than merely "cling to" the word of God.

Interestingly, the Apostle John described Jesus Christ as the Word.<sup>20</sup>

"In the beginning was *the Word*, and *the Word* was with God, and *the Word* was God. ...

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ...

"And *the Word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, one of the names of Jesus Christ is “The Word.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the eighth article of faith states, “We believe the Bible to be *the word of God* as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be *the word of God*.”<sup>23</sup>

Thus, the teachings of the Savior, as recorded in the holy scriptures, also are “the word.”

Let me suggest that holding fast to the word of God entails (1) remembering, honoring, and strengthening the personal connection we have with the Savior and His Father through the covenants and ordinances of the restored gospel and (2) prayerfully, earnestly, and consistently using the holy scriptures and the teachings of living prophets and apostles as sure sources of revealed truth. As we are bound and “hold fast” to the Lord and are transformed by living His doctrine,<sup>24</sup> I promise that individually and collectively we will be blessed to “stand in holy places, and shall not be moved.”<sup>25</sup> If we abide in Christ, then He will abide in and walk with us.<sup>26</sup> Surely, “in the days of trial his Saints he will cheer, and prosper the cause of truth.”<sup>27</sup>

## Testimony

Press on. Hold fast. Heed not.

I witness that fidelity to the covenants and ordinances of the Savior’s restored gospel enables us to *press on* in the work of the Lord, to *hold fast* to Him as the Word of God, and to *heed not* the allurements of the adversary. In the fight for right, may each of us wield a sword, even “the mighty sword of truth,”<sup>28</sup> in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

1. “Let Us All Press On,” *Hymns*, no. 243; emphasis added.
2. 1 Nephi 8:24.
3. 1 Nephi 8:30.
4. 1 Nephi 8:33.
5. 1 Nephi 8:33; emphasis added.
6. 2 Corinthians 3:3.
7. *Hymns*, no. 243.
8. See Matthew 11:28–30.
9. See Moroni 7:28; Doctrine and Covenants 110:4.
10. See John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Doctrine and Covenants 107:19.
11. See 2 Nephi 2:8.

12. See Alma 7:11–13.
13. See 3 Nephi 27:14–15.
14. *Hymns*, no. 243.
15. *Hymns*, no. 243.
16. See 3 Nephi 12:20; Moroni 10:32–33.
17. See 2 Nephi 25:23.
18. *Hymns*, no. 243.
19. 1 Nephi 15:23–24; emphasis added.
20. Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:1 reads: “In the beginning was the gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the word, and the word was with the Son, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God” (in the Bible appendix).
21. John 1:1, 3, 14; emphasis added.
22. “The Word” is a title of Jesus Christ found in several places in the scriptures (see John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1; Revelation 19:13; Doctrine and Covenants 93:8–10; Moses 1:32).
23. Articles of Faith 1:8; emphasis added.
24. See 2 Corinthians 5:17; Mosiah 3:19; 5:2; 27:25–26; Alma 5:49; Moroni 10:32.
25. Doctrine and Covenants 45:32.
26. See John 15:4–8; Doctrine and Covenants 50:41–43; Moses 6:33–34, 39.
27. *Hymns*, no. 243.
28. *Hymns*, no. 243.