

The Testimony of Jesus

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My invitation is to act now to secure your place as one who is valiant in the testimony of Jesus.

In 1832, Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received a remarkable vision concerning the eternal destiny of God’s children. This revelation spoke of three heavenly kingdoms. President Dallin H. Oaks spoke about these “kingdoms of glory” last October,¹ noting that “through the triumph and the glory of the Lamb,”² all but a relatively few individuals are eventually redeemed into one of these kingdoms, “according to the desires manifested through their choices.”³ God’s plan of redemption constitutes a universal opportunity for all His children, whenever and wherever they may have lived on the earth.

While the glory of even the least of the three kingdoms, the telestial, “surpasses all understanding,”⁴ our Father’s hope is that we will choose—and, through the grace of His Son, qualify for—the highest and most glorious of these kingdoms, the celestial, where we may enjoy eternal life as “joint-heirs with Christ.”⁵ President Russell M. Nelson has urged us to “think celestial,” making the celestial kingdom our eternal goal and then “carefully considering where each of [our] decisions while here on earth will place [us] in the next world.”⁶

Those in the celestial kingdom are “*they who received the testimony of Jesus, ... who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.*”⁷ The inhabitants of the second, or terrestrial, kingdom are described as essentially good, including the “honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men.” Their principal limiting trait is that they “*are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus.*”⁸ By contrast, those in the lower, telestial kingdom are those who “received not the gospel, *neither the testimony of Jesus.*”⁹

Note that the distinguishing characteristic for the inhabitants of each kingdom is how they relate to “the testimony of Jesus,” ranging from (1) wholehearted devotion to (2) not being valiant to (3) outright rejection. On each person’s reaction hangs his or her eternal future.

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What is the testimony of Jesus?

It is the witness of the Holy Spirit that He is the divine Son of God, the Messiah and Redeemer. It is John’s testimony that Jesus was in the beginning with God, that He is the Creator of heaven and earth, and that “in him was the gospel, and the gospel was the life, and the life was the light of men.”¹⁰ It is “the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, ... that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven.”¹¹ It is the knowledge that “there is no other

name given whereby salvation cometh.”¹² It is the “testimony, last of all,” given by the Prophet Joseph Smith, “that he lives! ... That he is the Only Begotten of the Father—that by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God.”¹³

II.

Beyond this testimony is the question, What do we do about it?

The inheritors of the celestial kingdom “receive” the testimony of Jesus in the fullest sense by being baptized, receiving the Holy Ghost, and overcoming by faith.¹⁴ The principles and truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ govern their priorities and choices. The testimony of Jesus is manifest in what they are and what they are becoming. Their motive is charity, “the pure love of Christ.”¹⁵ Their focus is on pursuing “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹⁶

At least some of those who will be found in the terrestrial kingdom also accept the testimony of Jesus, but they are distinguished by what they *don't* do about it. Not being valiant in the witness of the Savior suggests a degree of apathy or casualness—being “lukewarm”¹⁷— as opposed to the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon, for example, who were “distinguished for their zeal towards God.”¹⁸

The inhabitants of the telestial kingdom are those who reject the testimony of Jesus along with His gospel, His covenants, and His prophets. They are described by Abinadi as “having gone according to their own carnal wills and desires; having never called upon the Lord while the arms of mercy were extended towards them; for the arms of mercy were extended towards them, and they would not.”¹⁹

III.

What does it mean to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus?

There are several possibilities that could be considered in answering this question. I will mention a few. Being valiant in the testimony of Jesus surely includes nurturing and strengthening that testimony. True disciples do not ignore the seemingly small things that sustain and strengthen their testimony of Jesus, such as prayer, study of the scriptures, Sabbath observance, partaking of the sacrament, repentance, ministering, and worship in the house of the Lord. President Nelson reminds us that “with frightening speed, a testimony that is not nourished daily ‘by the good word of God’ [Moroni 6:4] can crumble. Thus, ... we need daily experiences worshipping the Lord and studying His gospel.” Then he added: “I plead with you to let God prevail in your life. Give Him a fair share of your time. As you do, notice what happens to your positive spiritual momentum.”²⁰

Being valiant also suggests being open and public about one’s witness. In baptism, we confirm our willingness “to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death.”²¹ In this Easter season especially, we joyfully, publicly, and unreservedly proclaim our witness of the resurrected, living Christ.

One aspect of being valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to heed His messengers. God does not force us into the better path, the covenant path, but He instructs His prophets to make us fully aware of the consequences of our choices. And it is not just the members of His Church. Through His prophets and apostles, He lovingly pleads with all the world to heed the truth that will make them free,²² spare them needless suffering, and bring them enduring joy.

Being valiant in the testimony of Jesus means encouraging others, by word and example, to likewise be valiant, especially those of our own families. Elder Neal A. Maxwell once addressed “the essentially ‘honorable’ members [of the Church] who are skimming over the surface instead of deepening their discipleship and who are casually engaged rather than ‘anxiously engaged’ [Doctrine and Covenants 76:75; 58:27].”²³ Noting that all are free to choose, Elder Maxwell lamented: “Unfortunately, however, when some choose slackness, they are choosing not only for themselves, but for the next generation and the next. Small equivocations in parents can produce large deviations in their children! Earlier generations in a family may have reflected dedication, while some in the current generation evidence equivocation. Sadly, in the next, some may choose dissension, as erosion takes its toll.”²⁴

Years ago, Elder John H. Groberg related the story of a young family living in a small branch in Hawaii in the early 1900s. They had been members of the Church for about two years when one of their daughters fell ill with an undiagnosed disease and was hospitalized. At church the next Sunday, the father and his son prepared the sacrament as they did most weeks, but as the young father knelt to bless the bread, the branch president, suddenly realizing who was at the sacrament table, jumped up and cried, “Stop. You can’t touch the sacrament. Your daughter has an unknown disease. Leave immediately while someone else fixes new sacrament bread. We can’t have you here. Go.” The stunned father searchingly looked at the branch president and then the congregation and, sensing the depth of anxiety and embarrassment from all, motioned to his family, and they quietly filed out of the chapel.

Not a word was said as, dejectedly, the family walked along the trail to their small home. There they sat in a circle, and the father said, “Please be silent until I am ready to speak.” The young son wondered what they would do to get revenge for the shame they had suffered: would they kill the branch president’s pigs, or burn his house, or join another church? Five, ten, fifteen, twenty-five minutes passed in silence.

The father’s clenched fists began to relax, and tears formed. The mother began to cry, and soon each of the children was quietly weeping. The father turned to his wife and said, “I love you,” and then repeated those words to each of their children. “I love all of you and I want us to be together, forever, as a family. And the only way that can be is for all of us to be good members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and be sealed by the holy priesthood in the temple. This is not the branch president’s church. It is the Church of Jesus Christ. We will not allow any man or any hurt or embarrassment or pride to keep us from being together forever. Next Sunday we will go back to church. We will stay by ourselves until our daughter’s sickness is known, but we will go back.”

They did go back, their daughter recovered, and the family was sealed in the Laie Hawaii Temple when it was completed. Today, well over 100 souls call their father, grandfather, and great-grandfather blessed because he kept his eyes on eternity.²⁵

One last aspect of being valiant in the testimony of Jesus that I will mention is our individual pursuit of personal holiness. Jesus is our essential Redeemer,²⁶ and He pleads, “Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.”²⁷

The prophet Mormon describes one group of Saints who persevered in this manner despite having “to wade through much affliction”:²⁸

“Nevertheless they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.”²⁹ It is this mighty change of heart—yielding our hearts to God and being spiritually reborn through the grace of the Savior—that we seek.³⁰

My invitation is to act now to secure your place as one who is valiant in the testimony of Jesus. As repentance may be needed, “do not procrastinate the day of your repentance,”³¹ lest “in an hour when ye think not the summer shall be past, and the harvest ended, and your souls not saved.”³² Be zealous in keeping your covenants with God. Do not be “offended [by] the strictness of the word.”³³ “Remember to retain the name [of Christ] written always in your hearts, ... that ye [may] hear and know *the voice* by which ye shall be called, and also, *the name* by which he shall call you.”³⁴ And finally, “settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which [Jesus] shall teach, and command you.”³⁵

Our Father wants all His children who will to enjoy eternal life with Him in His celestial kingdom. Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected to make that possible. He “hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men.”³⁶ I pray that we may all be blessed with a burning testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, rejoice and be valiant in that testimony, and enjoy the fruits of His grace in our lives continually. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Dallin H. Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 26–29.
2. Doctrine and Covenants 76:39.
3. Dallin H. Oaks, “Kingdoms of Glory,” 26.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 76:89.
5. Romans 8:17.
6. Russell M. Nelson, “Think Celestial!,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2023, 118.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 76:51, 69; emphasis added.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 76:75, 79; emphasis added.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 76:101; emphasis added.
10. Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:4 (in the Bible appendix); see also John 1:1–3.
11. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2011), 49.

12. Mosiah 5:8.
13. Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–24. The testimony of Jesus comes by the Holy Ghost, the spirit of prophecy and revelation (see Revelation 19:10; *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 384–85).
14. See Doctrine and Covenants 76:51–53.
15. Moroni 7:47.
16. Ephesians 4:13.
17. See Revelation 3:15–16.
18. Alma 27:27.
19. Mosiah 16:12.
20. Russell M. Nelson, “The Power of Spiritual Momentum,” *Liahona*, May 2022, 99.
21. Mosiah 18:9.
22. See John 8:31–32.
23. Neal A. Maxwell, “Settle This in Your Hearts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 65. In addition to these remarks by Elder Maxwell, other general conference speakers in recent years have addressed this subject, including Quentin L. Cook (“Valiant in the Testimony of Jesus,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2016, 40–44) and Rebecca L. Craven (“Careful versus Casual,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 9–11).
24. Neal A. Maxwell, “Settle This in Your Hearts,” 65–66.
25. See John H. Groberg, “Writing Your Personal and Family History,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 48–49.
26. “He hath power given unto him from the Father to redeem [us] from [our] sins because of repentance; therefore he hath sent his angels to declare the [glad] tidings of the conditions of repentance, which bringeth unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of [our] souls” (Helaman 5:11). See also Helaman 5:10: Jesus redeems us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins.
27. 3 Nephi 27:20; see also verses 16–21; 3 Nephi 11:31–36.
28. Helaman 3:34.
29. Helaman 3:35.
30. See Mosiah 5:7; 27:24–31; Alma 5:11–15, 26; Moses 6:59–60.
31. Alma 34:33.
32. Doctrine and Covenants 45:2; see also Helaman 13:38.
33. Alma 35:15.

34. Mosiah 5:12; emphasis added.
35. Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28 (in Luke 14:27, footnote *b*).
36. Moroni 7:27.