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Valiant

IN OUR TESTIMONY OF THE SAVIOR

Each of us will be called upon to act in moments that are difficult and yet defining. These moments will determine who we are and what we have become.

As a young man many years ago, I was drafted—or as we called it, “conscripted”—into the South African military. I was assigned to a squad of soldiers who were good men but had the roughness of speech and behavior that is sometimes manifested by men serving in the military.

Surrounded by such influences, I discovered that it wasn’t always easy to live gospel standards. But from the beginning of my military service, I was pleased to stand up for my beliefs. I made it clear that I would not engage in conduct that I knew was wrong. I am grateful that the men in my squad—some grudgingly at first—grew to respect my standards.

On one occasion, during a military training camp, a group of us were standing around a campfire on a beautiful, dark, cloudless, star-filled night. Some of the fellows in my squad were drinking beer while I sipped a soft drink. The discussion was pleasant, with no improper talk.

During our visiting, a few men from another unit wandered over to our happy band. One of these men turned to me and, noticing the soft drink in my hand, mocked me for not joining the men in drinking beer. Before I could respond, one of my friends surprised me by rebuking the man.

“We suggest that you leave now, sir,” he said. “We will not have anyone speak to Chris like that! In fact, he is the only man amongst us who lives his life like a true Christian.”

With that, the rebuked man quietly skulked away into the dark night. At that moment, although a little embarrassed by the unexpected compliment, I remembered Paul’s counsel to be “an example of the believers” (1 Timothy 4:12).

You too face choices, especially at this time in your life, when your spirit is uniquely attuned and receptive to great opportunities that await you. The question is, what will you want to write about yourself in 5, 10, or 20 years’ time—or even at the end of your life?

What Does It Mean to Be Valiant?

In one of the most remarkable visions recorded in holy writ, the Prophet Joseph Smith described the condition of those who will inherit the celestial kingdom after they have been resurrected and judged. This same section in the Doctrine and Covenants (section 76) also reveals the conditions and circumstances of those who are not fit for the celestial kingdom but instead are candidates for the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms.

In speaking of those who will inherit the terrestrial kingdom, revelation teaches us that they “are [the] honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men . . . [and] who receive of [God’s] glory, but not of his fulness” (D&C 76:75–76). Then we learn this astounding principle: “These are they who are *not valiant in the testimony of Jesus*; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God” (D&C 76:79; emphasis added).

Imagine that for a moment. Would we forfeit the glory of the celestial kingdom, with all of its profound and everlasting blessings, simply because we were not valiant in the testimony of Jesus here on earth in our brief, mortal, probationary state?

What does it mean to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus? A modern-day Apostle of the Lord declared:

“It is to be courageous and bold; to use all our strength, energy, and ability in the warfare with the world; to fight

the good fight of faith. . . . The great cornerstone of valiance in the cause of righteousness is obedience to the whole law of the whole gospel.

“To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to ‘come unto Christ, and be perfected in him’; it is to deny ourselves ‘of all ungodliness,’ and ‘love God’ with all our ‘might, mind and strength.’ (Moroni 10:32.)

“To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to believe in Christ and his gospel with unshakable conviction. It is to know of the verity and divinity of the Lord’s work on earth. . . .

“To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to ‘press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.’ It is to ‘endure to the end.’ (2 Nephi 31:20.) It is to live our religion, to practice what we preach, to keep the commandments. It is the manifestation of ‘pure religion’ in the lives of men; it is visiting ‘the fatherless and widows in their affliction’ and keeping ourselves ‘unspotted from the world.’ (James 1:27.)

“To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to bridle our

passions, control our appetites, and rise above carnal and evil things. It is to overcome the world as did he who is our prototype and who himself was the most valiant of all our Father’s children. It is to be morally clean, to pay our tithes and offerings, to honor the Sabbath day, to pray with full purpose of heart, to lay our all upon the altar if called upon to do so.

“To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to take the Lord’s side on every issue. It is to vote as he would vote. It is to think what he thinks, to believe what he believes, to say what he would say and do what he would do in the same situation. It is to have the mind of Christ and be one with him as he is one with his Father.”¹

Here I need to add something our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, taught during His earthly, mortal ministry:

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

To be valiant is to live our religion, to practice what we preach, and to keep the commandments.



“For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

“And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

“And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

“He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:34–39).

Our purpose in mortality is nothing more or less than to prepare to live once again in the presence of our beloved Heavenly Father as joint heirs with Jesus Christ (see Romans 8:16–18). This glorious existence in eternal families alongside our wife or husband and our children and extended family

is available to everyone even though some are to experience these blessings sometime beyond the veil of mortality.

Such blessings require that we take up our cross and remain valiant unto the end in testimony and devotion to our Lord and Savior.

Prepare to Act

The road each of us is required to chart is filled with countless opportunities and fraught with numerous challenges. We are required to make many decisions every day—some small and seemingly unimportant, others profound and lasting in their effects.

It is a glaring fact that each of us will be called upon to act in moments that are difficult and yet defining. These moments will determine who we are and what we have become. Often they come when it is inconvenient and



unpopular to act righteously and valiantly. As you write your life's story, you will find that the most defining moments you will ever face occur when you are standing alone.

I relate an account here of standing alone in the midst of great opposition. Sometime during November 1838, the Prophet Joseph Smith and others, including Elder Parley P. Pratt (1807–57), were chained and incarcerated in Richmond, Missouri, USA.

Elder Pratt records the following incident during their incarceration:

“In one of those tedious nights we had lain as if in sleep till the hour of midnight had passed, and our ears and hearts had been pained, while we had listened for hours to the obscene jests, the horrid oaths, the dreadful blasphemies and filthy language of our guards, Colonel Price at their head, as they recounted to each other their deeds of rapine, murder, robbery, etc., which they had committed

among the ‘*Mormons*’ while at Far West [Missouri] and vicinity. They even boasted of defiling by force wives, daughters and virgins, and of shooting or dashing out the brains of men, women and children.

“I had listened till I became so disgusted, shocked, horrified, and so filled with the spirit of indignant justice that I could scarcely refrain from rising upon my feet and rebuking the guards; but had said nothing to Joseph, or any one else, although I lay next to him and knew he was awake. On a sudden he arose to his feet, and spoke in a voice of thunder, or as the roaring lion, uttering, as near as I can recollect, the following words:

“SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and hear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!”

“He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty.

Chained, and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel, he looked upon the quailing guards, whose weapons were lowered or dropped to the ground; whose knees smote together, and who, shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards.”²

The courage that the Prophet Joseph Smith showed is not reserved for prophets or members of the Church of a previous generation. An incident in the life of President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) bears this out. In the fall of 1857, while 19-year-old Joseph F. was returning from his mission in Hawaii, USA, he joined a wagon train in California, USA. It was a volatile time for the Saints. Johnston’s Army was marching toward Utah, and many had bitter feelings toward the Church.

One evening, several hoodlums rode into the wagon train camp, cursing and threatening to hurt every Mormon they could find. Most in the wagon train hid in the brush, but Joseph F. thought to himself: “Shall I run from these fellows? Why should I fear them?”

With that, he walked up to one of the intruders, who, with pistol in hand, demanded, “Are you a ‘Mormon?’”

Joseph F. responded, “Yes, siree; dyed in the wool; true blue, through and through.”

At that, the hoodlum grasped his hand and said, “Well you are the ——— pleasantest man I ever met! Shake, young fellow, I am glad to see a man that stands up for his convictions.”³

You are now engaged in some of the most significant moments of your life! You are now writing and will yet write, moment by moment and day by day, your personal history. There will be times when you will need

to act, while on other occasions you will wisely hold your peace. Opportunities will abound, decisions will need to be made, and challenges will have to be confronted!

In our Heavenly Father’s great plan of happiness, ever remember that you are never alone! Many in this life, and more beyond the veil of mortality, even on this very day, are pleading your cause with the Lord. Great power has been given you through the ordinances you have received and the covenants you have made. Above all, your beloved Heavenly Father and His Son—our Savior Jesus Christ, our Advocate—are ever present to help you through life. In a deeply affecting teaching during the Savior’s mortal ministry, He extended an invitation to every living soul and therefore to each of us:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

“For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

I add my solemn witness of the living reality of our Eternal Heavenly Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I also testify that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in every conceivable way the Lord’s restored Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.

May I—and those who share this testimony—ever remain valiant to this great cause. ■

From an LDS Business College devotional address, “Being Valiant,” given at the Assembly Hall on Temple Square on June 17, 2014. For the full address, go to ldsbc.edu.

NOTES

1. Bruce R. McConkie, “Be Valiant in the Fight of Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1974, 35.
2. *Autobiography of Parley Parker Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 210–11.
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* (1998), 104.



STAND FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE

“May we ever be courageous and prepared to stand for what we believe, and if we must stand alone in the process, may we do so courageously, strengthened by the knowledge that in reality we are never alone when we stand with our Father in Heaven.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Dare to Stand Alone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2011, 67.