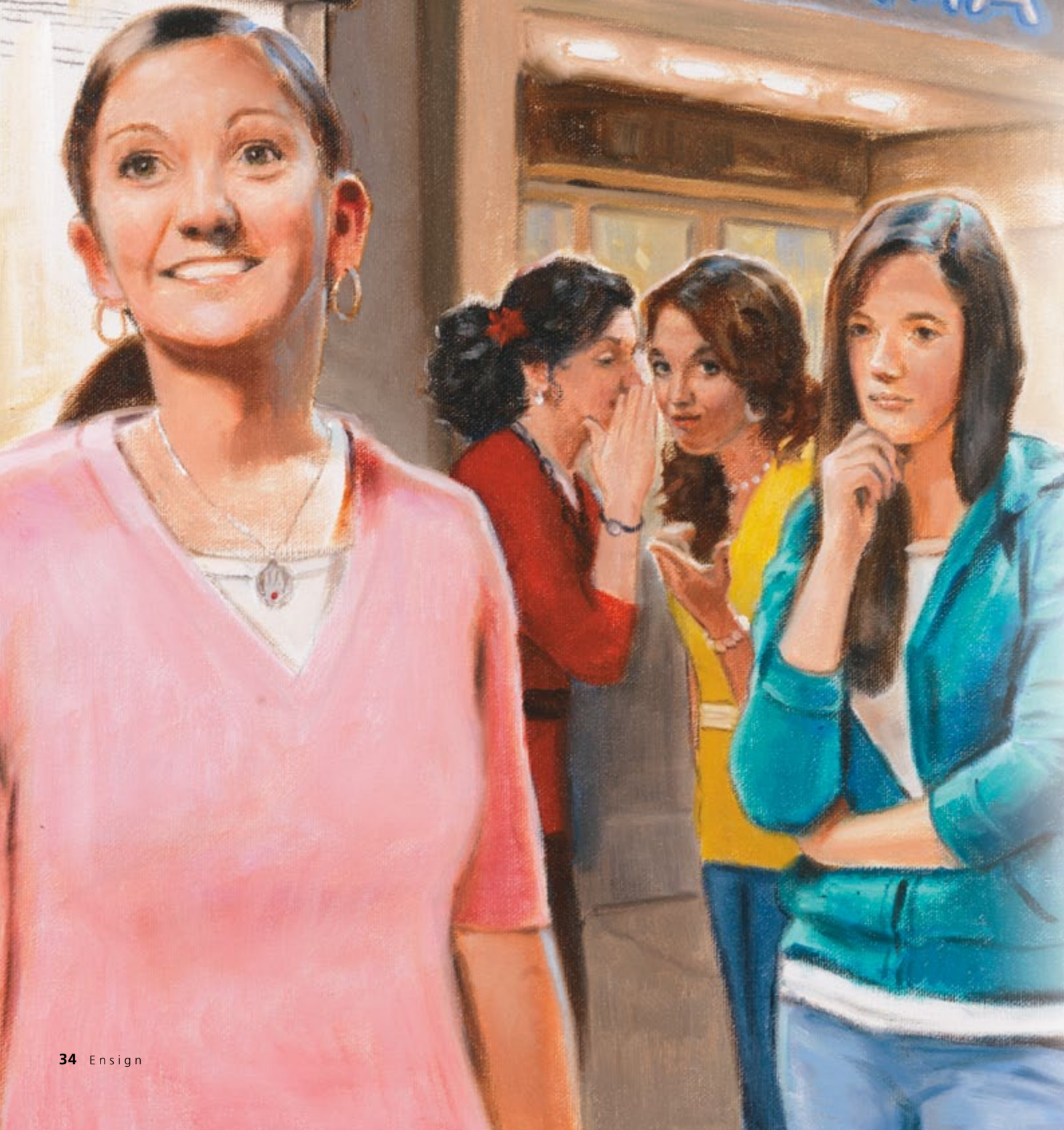


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By Elder
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Of the Seventy



VALIANT
IN THE
TESTIMONY
OF

The Lord tells us to follow Him and not be ashamed or unwilling to stand out. Do not be ashamed to hold up His light. Do not be afraid to shine.

Jesus Christ

Several years ago as I was thinking about the effect my call to serve as a mission president in Chile would have on our family and on my work, my thoughts were directed to Gethsemane, and a simple, clear impression came to me: “Don’t count the cost.” I realized then that in comparison with the immeasurable price paid in Gethsemane and on Calvary, whatever might be required of me was “small change.” I felt ashamed to have been adding up the sum of our small sacrifices.

Whatever the Lord asks is little in comparison with what He has given and in light of what we receive through our small sacrifices—even redemption, revelation, power, joy, peace, knowledge, confidence, faith, hope, charity, dominions, eternal life, and all the Father has.

The Apostle Paul did not count the cost. He was relentless in his efforts to go “into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He went to Jerusalem, Damascus, Cilicia, Syria, Antioch, Turkey, Greece, and Rome, proclaiming “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). He taught in the temple and in the streets, in homes and in synagogues, in royal courts and behind prison walls, in churches and in marketplaces, and in peril, sickness, and chains. He also taught before the Sanhedrin, kings, governors, angry mobs, and friends.

He was beaten, derided, whipped, stoned, shipwrecked, impoverished, imprisoned, forgotten, and ultimately killed because of his words. Words that others carefully measured and softly whispered from behind closed doors thundered forth from the mouth of Paul in the broad light of day—words that will echo to the end of time.

Keeping the Faith

One of the hallmarks of a life well lived, a life worthy to return to God’s presence and receive a fulness of the Father, is to be “valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:79). Paul was valiant, and we can be valiant as well. To be “valiant in the testimony of Jesus” is to be faithful.

Paul was faithful. The Lord told Him to go, and he went. He never stopped. He was committed to following the Lord and doing right regardless of the consequences.

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith may be viewed as faithfulness in the face of uncertainty. It is following the Lord, going forward without knowing the outcome. Following the Lord and being faithful to the end are the qualities most linked to eternal life. Of all that Paul might have otherwise said in summing up his amazing life and ministry, he merely would say that he was faithful. He wrote:



Paul was valiant, and we can be valiant as well. To be “valiant in the testimony of Jesus” is to be faithful.

“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, *I have kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:6–7; emphasis added).

Like Paul, we can be faithful. We can fight the good fight and stay the course, one day at a time. We can keep going come what may. Even when we think we can’t, we can.

Letting Your Light Shine

The Savior said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). He also said, “Therefore, hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. *Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up*—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:24; emphasis added).

For those of us who feel wanting when it

comes to talents and gifts, it is encouraging to know that this invitation is not to dazzle others with who *we* are or what *we* know. Rather, our light is the Light of the World reflected in us as we simply strive to do as He did. That’s it. The Lord tells us to follow Him and not be ashamed or unwilling to stand out. Do not be ashamed to hold up His light. Do not be afraid to shine. Do not worry about the outcome.

As with the Savior and the Prophet Joseph Smith, Paul was embroiled in controversy and opposed wherever he went. Controversy was his constant companion but never his object. It was rather the frequent consequence of faithfulness.

The Savior and those who have taken upon them His name have always drawn and will always draw criticism. The truth never exists unopposed. It will always have many times more than its share of antagonists,

desperately striving to disprove, debunk, discredit, and destroy. That is so because it is truth; if it were not, it would be of no consequence and the world would pay it no mind, much less waste any effort to oppose it. It would be permitted to roll along into oblivion, unnoticed and forgotten.

Human tendency is to blend in with the crowd. “Broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13). But we must be willing to speak up, stand up, and stand out for the truth.

Many of us are not comfortable with attention, much less criticism. Many of us would rather go unnoticed because if we can blend in, less will be expected of us. Safety is sought in the crowd rather than in the Lord, and the crowd almost always seeks a silent consensus of mediocrity. However good the crowd, it expects less of us than what we are truly capable of giving. There is only one Light, one standard that reveals and requires the full measure of our potential and offers the power by which it can be realized. Jesus Christ is the Light and Life of the world. He alone both reveals our weaknesses and provides us with the power to change and become strong where we are weak.

If you follow the Savior, like Paul you will stand out as a light shining in the darkness. Your light, which is His light, will shine, and whether or not you choose it or want it, you will be a city set on a hill. Your light will shine as an inevitable consequence of faithfully choosing to follow the Lord whatever the cost. You will not be able to hide, even though you may want to hide. Often you will stand alone, but you won't really be alone. He will stand by you. He will be with you.

Being Valiant

If measured by the life of Paul, valiance in the testimony of Christ may seem to be a very high standard. So what about those of us who have never been driven from home or threatened with harm or death because of our beliefs? Are we valiant? Can we be? The consequences for us may not be as extreme as with Paul, but the principle is the same: choose the right regardless of the consequences.

You are valiant if you:

- Keep on going when you think you can't go anymore.
- Admit your mistakes and strive to be better.
- Pick up the scriptures and put down the TV remote.
- Tell the truth when a lie would be easier.
- Refuse to do wrong even when everyone else is doing wrong.
- Set aside personal interests and postpone education to serve a mission.
- Speak no ill of another.
- Are honest even when it seems that no one else is.
- Choose not to click on a pornographic site.
- Smile and help another even when you yourself need help.
- Exercise self-control.
- Pray with all your heart.
- Forgive.
- Strive to raise your children in light and truth.
- Share the gospel without regard to consequences.
- Remember the Lord and keep His commandments.
- Don't count the cost.

Heavenly Father's plan is not that there be only a few lights shining here and there; rather, His purpose is to empower, uplift, and exalt all of His children so that the light of their lives may shine forth everywhere. He said to *all* who have accepted His gospel:

“For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“*Verily I say unto you all: Arise and shine forth*, that thy light may be a standard for the nations;

“And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth” (D&C 115:4–6; emphasis added).

Paul was faithful and unafraid to shine. May we also be faithful and valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ, and may we let His light shine in our lives whatever the cost. ■