

The Parable of the TREASURE VAULT



Elder Talmage served as an Apostle for 22 years and wrote two Church books that are in wide use to this day: Jesus the Christ and The Articles of Faith. Elder Talmage also published a series of parables—stories taken from his personal experience that teach gospel principles. The following parable was published in the Improvement Era, Oct. 1914, 1108–9; spelling and punctuation modernized.

What is the worth of a soul? It's priceless and must be kept safe.

By Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933)

Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

Among the news items of recent date was the report of a burglary, some incidents of which are unusual in the literature of crime. The safety-vault of a wholesale house dealing in jewelry and gems was the object of the attack. From the care and skill with which the two robbers had laid their plans, it was evident that they were adept in their nefarious business.

They contrived to secrete themselves within the building and were locked in when the heavily barred doors were closed for the night. They knew that the great vault of steel and masonry was of the best construction and of the kind guaranteed as burglar-proof; they knew also that it contained treasure of enormous value; and they relied for success on their patience, persistency, and craft, which had been developed

through many previous, though lesser, exploits in safe-breaking. Their equipment was complete, comprising of drills, saws, and other tools, tempered to penetrate even the hardened steel of the massive door, through which alone entrance to the vault could be effected. Armed guards were stationed in the corridors of the establishment, and the approaches to the strong room were diligently watched.

Through the long night the thieves labored, drilling and sawing around the lock, whose complicated mechanism could not be manipulated even by one familiar with the combination, before the hour for which the time-control had been set. They had calculated that by persistent work they would have time during the night to break open the safe and secure such of the valuables as they could carry; then they would trust to luck, daring, or force to make their escape. They would not hesitate to kill if they were opposed. Though the difficulties of the undertaking were greater than expected, the skilled criminals succeeded with tools and explosives in reaching the interior of the lock; then they threw back the bolts and forced open the ponderous doors.

What saw they within? Drawers filled with gems, trays of diamonds, rubies, and pearls,

think you? Such and more they had confidently expected to find and to secure; but instead they encountered an inner safe, with a door heavier and more resistant than the first, fitted with a mechanical lock of more intricate construction than that at which they had worked so strenuously. The metal of the second door was of such superior quality as to splinter their finely tempered tools; try as they

would they could not so much as scratch it. Their misdirected energy was wasted; frustrated were all their infamous plans.

Like unto one's reputation is the outer door of the treasure-vault; like unto his character is the inner portal. A good name is a strong defense, but though it be assailed and even marred or broken, the soul it guards is safe, provided only the inner character be impregnable. ■

HOW TO BUILD STRONG CHARACTER



Character is the manifestation of what you are becoming. Strong moral character results from consistent correct choices in the trials and testing of life. Your faith

can guide you to those correct choices. . . .

“ . . . The bedrock of character is integrity. Worthy character will strengthen your capacity to obediently respond to the direction of the Spirit. Righteous character is what you are becoming. It is more important than what you own, what you have learned, or what goals you have accomplished. It allows you to be trusted. Righteous character provides the foundation of spiritual strength. It enables you in times of trial and testing to make difficult, extremely important decisions correctly even when they seem overpowering. I testify that neither Satan nor any other power can weaken or destroy your growing character. Only you could do that through disobedience.

“Our Father's plan is marvelous. Your exercise of faith builds character. Fortified character expands your capacity to exercise faith. Thus, your confidence in conquering the trials of life is enhanced. And the strengthening cycle continues. The more your character is fortified, the more enabled you are to exercise the power of faith.”

Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “The Sustaining Power of Faith in Times of Uncertainty and Testing,” *Liahona and Ensign*, May 2003, 77.

Read the story on the next page for an example of a young man who strengthened his character by making a correct choice.

