

His Servants, the Prophets

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Of the Seventy

The Master speaks to us through His prophet.



During my growing-up years in the small farming community of Spring City, Utah, an opportunity afforded itself each summer to be with my father alone for two weeks herding sheep in the mountain range of the Manti-La Sal. On one occasion the fog rested heavily in the area to the extent that you could not see your outstretched hand in front of you, and the evening was drawing nigh.

My father suggested that I return to camp, and he would soon follow. I remember questioning how I would be able to find the camp amidst the fog. My father simply said to me, “Give the horse the reins, and he will get you to camp.” Following this counsel, I loosened my grip on the

reins, and with encouragement to the horse, the journey began. At times I would be struck in the face by a low-hanging limb I couldn’t see or have my leg brush close to a tree. Eventually, the horse came to a complete stop, and the silhouette of the camp was in view.

Sometimes we may not always be able to immediately find the desired way before us, but the wisdom of those who have gone before, coupled with the wisdom of those who are with us still, will be our guide if we let them have the reins.

“Understandest thou what thou readest?” was the question asked by Philip of one who was diligently searching the scriptures.

The response came in the form of a question: “How can I, except some man should guide me?”¹

The answer to these searching questions comes from the prophets throughout ages past who taught the importance of searching the scriptures, along with a promise: “Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived.”²

In each dispensation, the Lord has given commandments to the prophets “that they should proclaim these things unto the world; and all this that it might be fulfilled.”³ Doctrine and Covenants section 1 constitutes the Lord’s preface to the

doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times. Of specific mention are verses 37–38:

“Search these commandments, for they are true and faithful, and the prophecies and promises which are in them shall all be fulfilled.

“What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”

It is the voice of seven of the Lord’s servants of which I speak today. In March 1970, a long hoped-for desire to be of service to the Lord’s chosen servants commenced. From the very outset, opportunities were provided to be directly involved with the Brethren of the Quorum of the Twelve and subsequently with members of the First Presidency for almost four decades. It was during these formative years that an understanding of “my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled” began to swell in my heart.

Important admonition has been given in general conferences of yesteryear and will continue to be expounded by those who have the wisdom of ages past, which allows our hearts to burn within us. It will be in following such counsel that we must be strong, never give up, and endure to the end.

Let me share the direction and counsel given by these prophets of God. For example, it was President Joseph Fielding Smith who often quoted the words set forth in the 24th chapter of Psalms, wherein a question is asked, an answer given, and a blessing promised to the faithful.

The question: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?”

The answer: “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath



not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”

The promise: “He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”⁴

President Harold B. Lee in general conference counseled us to give heed to the words and commandments the Lord shall give through His prophet: “You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views . . . [or] your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if [we] listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that . . . ‘the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name’s glory.’”⁵

Prior to his passing in December 1973, President Lee, speaking to an assembled group of Church employees and their families, posed the question after giving a history of the Church’s welfare program: “Do you

believe these prophets knew what they were talking about?” Later in the same address, concerning the Brethren’s counsel to guard against the permissiveness invading the home through inappropriate literature and television, he asked, “Are you too close to the Brethren [so that you] think of them not as prophets but as men just guessing [such counsel] might be a good thing?”⁶

It was President Spencer W. Kimball who in his writings provided us the comforting words that there is a miracle of forgiveness and God will forgive. In another setting, concerning the unexpected challenges which we may face, President Kimball cautioned us, if individually given the power to alter life-changing moments, would we have modified the events at Carthage Jail which resulted in the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith? And more importantly, with such uncontrolled power, what might we have done in the decisive moment of Gethsemane and the words spoken,



“Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done”⁷

Each morning in the meeting of the First Presidency, the Brethren take turns praying. I always liked to listen to President Ezra Taft Benson pray. His prayers were almost entirely in thankfulness instead of asking for blessings. Of Another Testament of Jesus Christ, President Benson reiterated the words of the Prophet Joseph Smith “that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”⁸ He admonished us to follow the Savior, who said, “Look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live; for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.”⁹

During his nine-month period of service as President of the Church, we all fell in love with the innate goodness of President Howard W. Hunter, who issued invitations for members of the Church to:

“Live with ever more attention to the life and example of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially the love and hope and compassion He displayed. . . .

“ . . . Establish the temple of the Lord as the great symbol of their membership and the supernal setting for their most sacred covenants. It would be the deepest desire of my

heart to have every member of the Church be temple worthy.”¹⁰

President Gordon B. Hinckley stated: “I have not spoken face to face with all of the prophets of this dispensation. I was not acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith, nor did I ever hear him speak. [However,] my grandfather, who as a young man lived in Nauvoo, did hear him and testified of his divine calling as the great prophet of this dispensation.”¹¹

President Hinckley bore witness of the First Vision, when young Joseph Smith went to pray in a grove and received his answer through divine revelation from both the Father and the Son.

President Hinckley’s passion with the building of temples and the sacred work performed therein will be a polar star for each of us to follow.

Our beloved prophet, President Thomas S. Monson, has reemphasized again the hoped-for desire of the First Presidency who in 1839 gave the direction we should constantly seek even today: “Upon your diligence, your perseverance and faithfulness, the soundness of the doctrines which you preach, the moral precepts that you advance and practice . . . hang the destinies of the human family.”¹²

It is President Monson whom we sustain as the prophet, seer, and revelator and who serves as the resounding voice to the widow, the fatherless,

and to all who stand in need. He has truly exemplified in his life the pattern of the Master and the sincere desire to always be found in His service. It is President Monson who is the Lord’s mouthpiece and whose counsel and direction we are admonished to follow. In a very real sense, the Master speaks to us through His prophet. I know, and have recorded in meetings of the Brethren assembled, this to be true.

As one who has been taught at the feet of living prophets and of these latter-day witnesses whom I have known and love, I testify in all truthfulness, as members of this Church heed the words and commandments the Lord gave to the prophets of the testaments and followed by the Lord’s prophet even today, we will more fully understand that “surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”¹³

Of these truths and that God is in the heavens, that Jesus is the Christ, and of this The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has prophets, seers, and revelators to guide us, I bear solemn witness in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Acts 8:30–31.
2. Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37.
3. D&C 1:18.
4. Psalm 24:3–5.
5. Harold B. Lee, in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, 152; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970, 126.
6. Harold B. Lee, Christmas devotional for employees of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Dec. 13, 1973; in *The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams (1996), 298.
7. Luke 22:42; see Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 100.
8. *History of the Church*, 4:461.
9. 3 Nephi 15:9.
10. Quoted in Jay M. Todd, “President Howard W. Hunter: Fourteenth President of the Church,” *Ensign*, July 1994, 4–5.
11. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Believe His Prophets,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 50.
12. *History of the Church*, 3:395; for further information on this epistle, see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Church History and Modern Revelation* (1950), 48–49.
13. Amos 3:7.