

THE TEST OF

BY PRESIDENT DAVID O. MCKAY

(1873–1970)

Ninth President of the Church



The testimony of Jesus abides in the soul, and strength comes to each individual to withstand the evils of the world.

Zion is the pure in heart, and the strength of this Church lies in the purity of the thoughts and lives of its members.

I was with a party of friends, driving over a beautiful valley. We passed a beautiful wheat field. . . . One of the party expressed his admiration of the luxuriant growth in the field. There it stood apart from the sagebrush and barren surroundings.

But he was not satisfied with looking at it in the aggregate. We stopped, and he looked at individual heads of wheat and exclaimed, “Look what large heads.” Just one; it was the individual stalk that gave him that impression. He then broke the head, shuffled it in his hand, blew the chaff away, and examined each kernel. “The kernels,” he continued, “are plump and solid.” After all, the test of that wheat field was the individual kernel of wheat, and so it is in a community; so it is in the Church.

The test, after all, of the efficiency of

God’s people is an individual one. What is the individual doing? Each one should ask, “Am I living so that I am keeping unspotted from the evil of the world?” . . .

Three Types of Temptation

Zion is the pure in heart (see D&C 97:21), and the strength of this Church lies in the purity of the thoughts and lives of its members. Then the testimony of Jesus abides in the soul, and strength comes to each individual to withstand the evils of the world.

These evils present themselves subtly in our daily associations. They come in the shape of temptations, and they came to the Savior after His baptism (see Matthew 4; Luke 4). What were those temptations? When Satan said, “Command these stones to be made bread,” he was appealing to the appetite. He knew that Jesus was hungry, that He was physically weak, and thought that by pointing to those little lime stones that resemble somewhat a Jewish loaf of bread, he could awaken a desire to eat. He

One





failed in that when he received the divine word: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Satan then tried Him in another way. He dared Him—an appeal to His pride, to His vanity—and quoted scripture to support his temptation, for the devil can find scripture for his purpose. But the Savior answered him in terms of scripture, “It is also written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

What was the third temptation? An appeal to His love of power, domain, wealth: “All these [the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof] I will give you,” said the tempter, “if you will only fall down and worship me.”

“Then Jesus saith unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Nearly every temptation that comes to you and me comes in one of those forms. Classify them, and you will find that nearly every temptation that makes you and me spotted, ever so little maybe, comes to us as (1) a temptation of the appetite, (2) a yielding to the pride, fashion, and vanity of those alienated from

the things of God, or (3) a gratifying of the passion or a desire for the riches of the world or power among men.

When do temptations come? They come to us in our social gatherings; they come to us at our weddings; they come to us at work. In our dealings in all the affairs of life, we find these subtle influences working, and it is when they manifest themselves to the consciousness of each individual that the defense of truth ought to exert itself.

*It may not be on the mountain height
Or over the stormy sea,
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me.
But if, by a still, small voice he calls
To paths that I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in thine:
I'll go where you want me to go.*
(Hymns, no. 270)

When that still, small voice calls to the performance of duty, insignificant though it seem, and its performance unknown to anyone save the individual and God, he who responds gains corresponding strength.

Withstanding Temptation

Temptation often comes in the same quiet way. Perhaps



yielding to it may not be known to anyone save the individual and his God, but if he does yield to it, he becomes to that extent weakened and spotted with the evil of the world.

Let me cite an instance: A young [man] was invited to a wedding in a foreign country, at which two of his acquaintances were joined together in the bonds of matrimony, the ceremony being performed by a minister of another church. This young man was the only Latter-day Saint present among the 100 or more guests at the table in the hotel. By each plate was a wine cup, filled to the brim, and also a glass of water.

After the ceremony, as the guests were all in their places, the minister arose and said, "Now I propose that the company drink the health of the newly married couple." They all arose. Politeness suggested that he take the wine cup. He was a missionary; he belonged to the Church that preaches the Word of Wisdom, revealed directly from God to the Prophet Joseph. Science since then has proved it to be indeed a word of wisdom. He was preaching that, and he was living it. Yet here was a time when he could indulge, no one would know. But he resisted. Now was the time to defend his Church, and that is what he did.

He took the glass of water, and some of his friends by him, dropping their wine cups, followed his example, and at least half a dozen wine glasses remained untouched. Others saw it, and the circumstance gave an excellent opportunity to talk with these guests about the Word of Wisdom.



Was he humiliated? No, he was strengthened. Were the guests embarrassed? No. Did they feel to condemn him? No. Condemnation was replaced by admiration, as it always is in the hearts of intelligent and God-fearing men and women. . . .

They are unspotted from the world. Then we shall become as God would have us, because we are preaching the gospel by our acts. "If ye love me," says the Lord, "keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

May He help us to do it, keep us pure and free, our homes pure and true, that our youth may breathe the atmosphere of purity and virtue, and we be ever true to the testimony of God that we have in our hearts. **NE**

Excerpted from an October 1911 general conference address; punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing modernized; subheads added.

To learn more about withstanding temptation, read "Up to the Challenge," *New Era*, Sept. 2006, p. 24, and "Overcoming Temptation," *New Era*, Jan. 2007, p. 23.

Nearly every temptation that comes to you and me comes in one of three forms. First, a temptation of the appetite; second a yielding to the pride, fashion, and vanity of those alienated from the things of God; and third, a gratifying of the passion or a desire for the riches of the world or power among men.