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The Temple and Your Spiritual Foundation

Whenever any kind of upheaval occurs in your life, the safest place to be spiritually is living inside your temple covenants!

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to be with you this morning to share the feelings of my heart.

As you know, we are performing major renovations on the historic Salt Lake Temple. This complex project includes major reinforcement of its original foundation, which has served well for more than a century. But this temple must stand much longer. In late May, I inspected the progress on this massive project. I thought you would appreciate seeing what my wife Wendy and I saw. I think you'll see why the hymn "How Firm a Foundation"¹ has come to have new meaning for us.

Video from the site of the Salt Lake Temple renovation: "We are looking at the original foundation of the Salt Lake Temple. I am standing in an area beneath what was the Garden Room. As I examine the craftsmanship of this entire building, I marvel at what the pioneers accomplished. I am totally in awe when I consider that they built this magnificent temple with only tools and techniques available to them more than a century ago.

"These many decades later, however, if we examine the foundation closely, we can see the effects of erosion, gaps in the original

stonework, and varying stages of stability in the masonry.

"Now as I witness what modern engineers, architects, and construction experts can do to reinforce that original foundation, I am absolutely amazed. Their work is astonishing!

"The foundation of any building, particularly one as large as this one, must be strong and resilient enough to withstand earthquakes, corrosion, high winds, and the inevitable settling that affects all buildings. The complex task of strengthening now underway will reinforce this sacred temple with the foundation that can and will stand the test of time."

We are sparing no effort to give this venerable temple, which had become increasingly *vulnerable*, a foundation that will withstand the forces of nature into the Millennium. In like manner, it is now time that we each implement extraordinary measures—perhaps measures we have never taken before—to strengthen our *personal spiritual* foundations. Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures.

My dear brothers and sisters, these *are* the latter days. If you and I are to withstand the forthcoming perils and pressures, it is imperative that we each have a *firm* spiritual foundation built upon the rock of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.²

So I ask each of you, how firm is *your* foundation? And what reinforcements to your testimony and understanding of the gospel are needed?

The temple lies at the center of strengthening our faith and spiritual fortitude because the Savior and His doctrine are the very heart of the temple. Everything taught in the temple, through instruction and through the Spirit, increases our



Just as the physical foundation of the Salt Lake Temple needs to be reinforced, we each need to implement extraordinary measures to strengthen our personal spiritual foundation.



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understanding of Jesus Christ. His essential ordinances bind us to Him through sacred priesthood covenants. Then, as we keep our covenants, He endows us with *His* healing, strengthening power.³ And oh, how we will need His power in the days ahead.

We have been promised that “if [we] are prepared [we] shall not fear.”⁴ This assurance has profound implications today. The Lord has declared that despite today’s unprecedented challenges, those who build their foundations upon Jesus Christ, and have learned how to draw upon His power, need not succumb to the unique anxieties of this era.

Temple ordinances and covenants are ancient. The Lord instructed Adam and Eve to pray, make covenants, and offer sacrifices.⁵ Indeed, “whenever the Lord has had a people on the earth who will obey His word, they have been commanded to build temples.”⁶ The standard works are replete with references to temple teachings, clothing, language, and more.⁷ *Everything* we believe and *every* promise God has made to His covenant people come together in the temple. In *every* age, the temple has underscored the precious truth that those who make covenants with God and keep them are children of the covenant.

Thus, in the house of the Lord, we can make the same covenants with

God that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made. And we can receive the same blessings!

Temples have been part of *this* dispensation from its earliest days.⁸ Elijah committed the keys of sealing authority to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple. The fulness of the priesthood was restored in the Nauvoo Temple.⁹

Until his martyrdom, Joseph Smith continued to receive revelations that furthered the restoration of the endowment and sealing ordinances.¹⁰ He recognized, however, that further refinement was needed. After administering the endowment to Brigham Young in May 1842, Joseph told Brigham, “This is not arranged right, but we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed, and I wish you to take this matter in hand and organize and systematize all these ceremonies.”¹¹

Following the Prophet’s death, President Young oversaw the completion of the Nauvoo Temple¹² and later built temples in the Utah Territory. At the dedication of the lower stories of the St. George Temple, Brigham Young vigorously declared the urgency of vicarious temple work when he said, “When I think upon this subject, I want the tongues of seven thunders to wake up the people.”¹³

From that time forward, temple ordinances were gradually refined.

President Harold B. Lee explained why procedures, policies, and even the administration of temple ordinances continue to change within the Savior’s restored Church. President Lee said: “The principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are divine. Nobody changes the principles and [doctrine] of the Church except the Lord by revelation. But methods change as the inspired direction comes to those who preside at a given time.”¹⁴

Consider how administering the sacrament has changed over the years. In earlier days, the water of the sacrament was offered to the congregation in one large vessel. Everyone drank from it. Now we use individual disposable cups. The procedure changed, but the covenants remain the same.

Ponder these three truths:

1. The Restoration is a process, not an event, and will continue until the Lord comes again.
2. The ultimate objective of the gathering of Israel¹⁵ is to bring the blessings of the temple to God’s faithful children.
3. As we seek how to accomplish *that* objective more effectively, the Lord reveals more insights. The ongoing Restoration needs ongoing revelation.

The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles have often asked the Lord if there are better ways to take the blessings of the temple to His faithful children. We seek guidance regularly on how to ensure worldwide accuracy and consistency of temple instruction, covenants, and ordinances despite differences in language and culture.

Under the Lord’s direction and in answer to our prayers, recent

procedural adjustments have been made. *He* is the One who wants you to understand with great clarity exactly what you are making covenants to do. *He* is the One who wants you to experience fully *His* sacred ordinances. *He* wants you to comprehend your privileges, promises, and responsibilities. *He* wants you to have spiritual insights and awakenings you've never had before. This *He* desires for *all* temple patrons, no matter where they live.

Current adjustments in temple procedures, and others that will follow, are continuing evidence that the Lord is actively directing His Church. He is providing opportunities for each of us to bolster our spiritual foundations more effectively by centering our lives on Him and on the ordinances and covenants of His temple. When you bring your temple recommend, a contrite heart, and a seeking mind to the Lord's house of learning, *He* will teach you.

Should distance, health challenges, or other constraints prohibit your temple attendance for a season, I invite you to set a regular time to rehearse in your mind the covenants you have made.

If you don't yet love to attend the temple, go more often—not less. Let the Lord, through His Spirit, teach and inspire you there. I promise you that over time, the temple will become a place of safety, solace, and revelation.

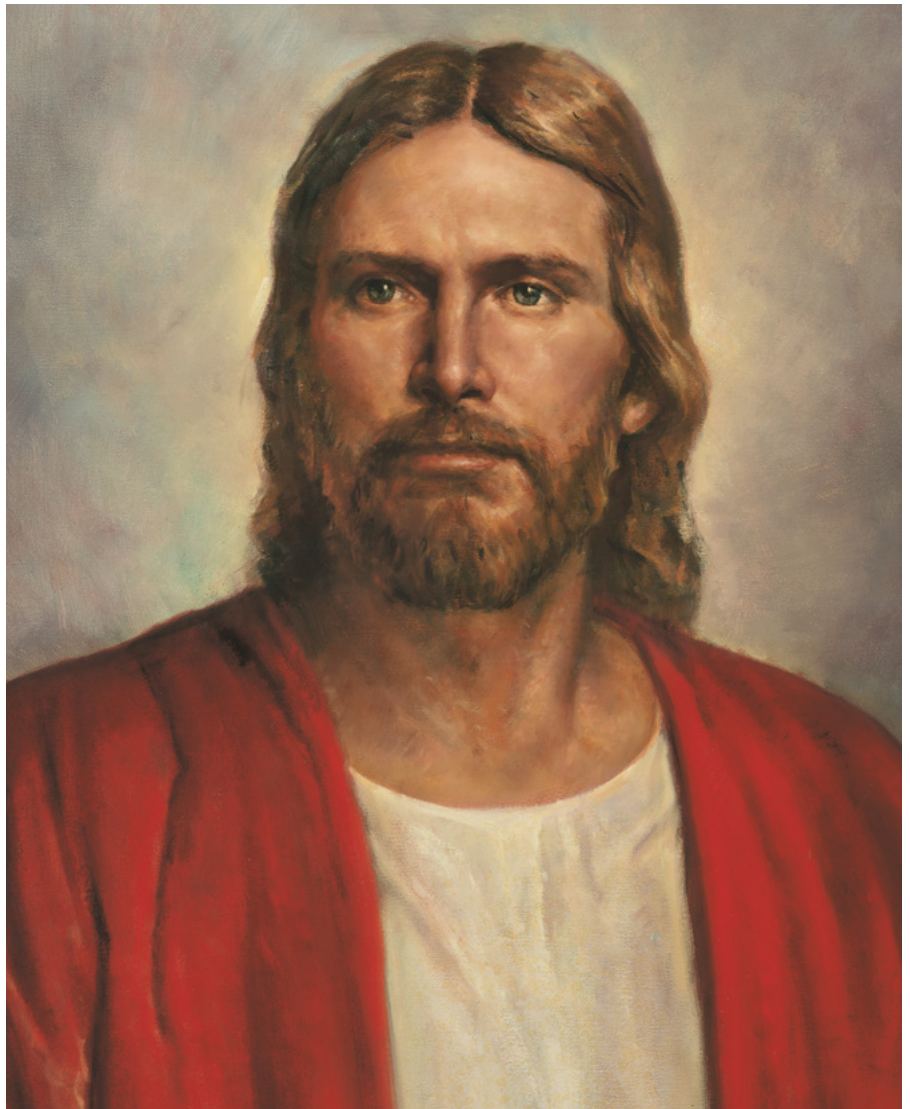
If it were possible for me to speak one-on-one with every young adult, I would plead with you to seek a companion with whom you can be sealed in the temple. You may wonder what difference this will make in your life. I promise it will make *all* the difference! As you marry in the

temple and return repeatedly, you will be strengthened and guided in your decisions.

If I could speak with each husband and wife who have *still* not been sealed in the temple, I would plead with you to take the necessary steps to receive that crowning, life-changing ordinance.¹⁶ Will it make a difference? Only if you want to progress forever and be together forever. *Wishing* to

be together forever will not make it so. No other ceremony or contract will make it so.¹⁷

If I could speak to each man or woman who longs for marriage but has not yet found his or her eternal companion, I would urge you not to wait until marriage to be endowed in the house of the Lord. Begin now to learn and experience what it means to be armed with priesthood power.



And to each of you who has made temple covenants, I plead with you to seek—prayerfully and consistently—to understand temple covenants and ordinances.¹⁸ Spiritual doors will open. You will learn how to part the veil between heaven and earth, how to ask for God’s angels to attend you, and how better to receive direction from heaven. Your diligent efforts to do so will reinforce and strengthen your spiritual foundation.

My dear brothers and sisters, when renovations on the Salt Lake Temple are completed, there will be *no safer* place during an earthquake in the Salt Lake Valley than inside that temple.

Likewise, whenever any kind of upheaval occurs in your life, the safest place to be *spiritually* is living *inside* your temple covenants!

Please believe me when I say that when your spiritual foundation is built solidly upon Jesus Christ, you have *no need to fear*. As you are true to your covenants made in the temple, you will be strengthened by His power. Then, when spiritual earthquakes occur, you will be able to stand *strong* because your spiritual foundation is solid and immovable.

I love you, dear brothers and sisters. These truths I know: God, our Heavenly Father, wants *you* to choose to come home to Him. His plan of eternal progression is not complicated, and it honors your agency. You are free to choose who you will be—and with whom you will be—in the world to come!

God lives! Jesus is the Christ! This is His Church, restored to help you fulfill your divine destiny. I so testify in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. See “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.
2. So that “when the devil [sends] forth his

mighty [wind], . . . it shall have no power over [us] . . . because of the rock upon which [we] are built, which is a *sure foundation*, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall” (Helaman 5:12; emphasis added).

3. See Doctrine and Covenants 109:15, 22.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 38:30; see also Doctrine and Covenants 10:55.
5. See Moses 5:5–6.
6. Bible Dictionary, “Temple.”
7. For example, see Exodus 28; 29; Leviticus 8. The tabernacle of Moses was known as a “tent of the testimony” (Numbers 9:15) and a “tabernacle of testimony” (Exodus 38:21). Solomon’s temple was destroyed in 587 BC, a few years after Lehi’s family left Jerusalem. The restoration of this temple by Zerubbabel took place some 70 years later. It was then damaged by fire in 37 BC. Herod expanded the temple in about 16 BC. Then this temple, known by Jesus, was destroyed in AD 70. Nephi had temple-like experiences by going “into the mount off” to pray (1 Nephi 18:3) and later, in the Americas, built a temple “after the manner of the temple of Solomon,” though it was less ornate (see 2 Nephi 5:16).
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:119; 124:31.
9. See Doctrine and Covenants 110:13–16; 124:28. The cornerstone for the Nauvoo Temple was laid on April 6, 1841, just a few months after Joseph Smith received the revelation to build it. The Nauvoo Temple had augmented functions. For example, the Lord explained that a baptismal font was needed for the Saints to be baptized for those who were dead (see Doctrine and Covenants 124:29–30).
10. See Doctrine and Covenants 131; 132. Doctrine and Covenants 128 contains an epistle Joseph Smith wrote to the Saints concerning baptism for the dead. There he declared that the salvation of the dead “is necessary and essential to our salvation, . . . [for] they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect” (verse 15).
11. Joseph Smith, in *Saints: The Story of the Church of Jesus Christ in the Latter Days*, vol. 1, *The Standard of Truth, 1815–1846* (2018), 454.
12. “Church Historian George A. Smith concluded that 5,634 brothers and sisters received their endowment in the partially completed Nauvoo Temple in December 1845 and January 1846. Sealings of couples continued on through Feb. 7, [1846,] by which time more than 2,000 couples had been united by the priesthood for time and eternity” (Bruce A. Van Orden, “Temple Finished before Exodus,” *Deseret News*, Dec. 9, 1995, deseret.com; see also Richard O. Cowan, “Endowments Bless the Living and Dead,” *Church News*, Aug. 27, 1988, thechurchnews.com).
13. “What do you suppose the fathers would say if they could speak from the dead? Would they not say, ‘We have lain here thousands of years, here in this prison house, waiting for this dispensation to come’? . . . Why, if they had the power the very thunders of heaven would be in our ears, if we could but realize the importance of the work we are engaged in. All the angels in heaven are looking at this little handful of people, and stimulating them to the salvation of the human family. . . . When I think upon this subject, I want the tongues of seven thunders to wake up the people” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 403–4).
14. Harold B. Lee, “God’s Kingdom—a Kingdom of Order,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1971, 10. See also a statement made by President Wilford Woodruff in 1896; he declared: “I want to say, as the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that we should now go on and progress. We have not [gotten] through with revelation. . . . President [Brigham] Young, who followed President Joseph Smith, led us here. He organized these temples and carried out the purposes of his calling and office. . . . He did not receive all the revelations that belong to this work; neither did President Taylor, nor has Wilford Woodruff. There will be no end to this work until it is perfected” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1946], 153–54).
15. See 3 Nephi 29:8–9.
16. See Doctrine and Covenants 131:2, 4.
17. See Doctrine and Covenants 132:7.
18. Elder John A. Widtsoe wrote: “To the man or woman who goes through the temple, with open eyes, heeding the symbols and the covenants, and making a steady, continuous effort to understand the full meaning, God speaks his word, and revelations come. The endowment is so richly symbolic that only a fool would attempt to describe it; it is so packed full of revelations to those who exercise their strength to seek and see, that no human words can explain or make clear the possibilities that reside in temple service. The endowment which was given by revelation can best be understood by revelation” (in Archibald F. Bennett, *Saviors on Mount Zion* [Sunday School manual, 1950], 168).