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Never Leave Him

As you choose not to be offended or ashamed, you will feel His love and approval. You will know that you are becoming more like Him.

My beloved brothers and sisters across the world, I express my deep admiration for the faith and courage I see in your lives. We live in a most remarkable time—but a challenging time.

The Lord Alerts Us to Dangers Ahead

The Lord has not left us alone in our quest to return to Him. Listen to His warning words alerting us to the dangers ahead: “Take . . . heed, watch and pray.”¹ “Beware lest ye . . . be deceived.”² “Be watchful and careful.”³ “Beware lest ye also . . . fall from your own stedfastness.”⁴

No one of us is immune from the influences of the world. The Lord’s counsel keeps us on guard.

You will remember Jesus’s experience in Capernaum as disciples who had followed the Savior would not accept that He was the Son of God. The scripture reads, “From that time many of his disciples . . . walked no more with him.”⁵

Jesus then turned to the Twelve and asked, “Will ye also go away?”⁶

Will Ye Also Go Away?

In my own mind I have answered that question many times: “Absolutely not! Not me! I will never leave Him!

I am here forever!” I know you have answered the same way.

But the question “Will ye also go away?” makes us think about our own vulnerability. Life is no spiritual picnic. The words of the Apostles from another setting come quietly into our mind: “Lord, is it I?”⁷

We enter the waters of baptism with joy and anticipation. The Savior beckons, “Come unto me,”⁸ and we respond, taking His name upon us. Not one of us wants this journey to be a brief flirtation with spirituality or even a notable but finite chapter. The road of discipleship is not for the spiritually faint of heart. Jesus said: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”⁹ “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”¹⁰

As we follow the Savior, without question there will be challenges that confront us. Approached with faith, these refining experiences bring a deeper conversion of the Savior’s reality. Approached in a worldly way, these same experiences cloud our view and weaken our resolve. Some we love and admire slip from the strait and narrow path and “[walk] no more with him.”

How Do We Remain True?

How do we remain true to the Savior, His gospel, and the ordinances of His priesthood? How do we develop the faith and strength to never leave Him?

Jesus said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”¹¹ We need the believing heart of a child.

Through the power of His Atonement, we are to become “as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father.”¹² This is the mighty change of heart.¹³

We soon see why a change of heart is necessary. Two words signal danger ahead: the words are *offended* and *ashamed*.

Choose Not to Be Offended

To those troubled by the Savior’s divinity, Jesus asked, “Doth this offend you?”¹⁴ In the parable of the sower, Jesus warned, “He . . . [endureth] for a while: [but] when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”¹⁵

Offense comes in many costumes and continually finds its way onstage. People we believe in disappoint us. We have unanticipated difficulties. Our life doesn’t turn out exactly the way we were expecting. We make mistakes, feel unworthy, and worry about being forgiven. We wonder about a doctrinal issue. We learn of something spoken from a Church pulpit 150 years ago that bothers us. Our children are treated unfairly. We are ignored or underappreciated. It could be a hundred things, each very real to us at the time.¹⁶

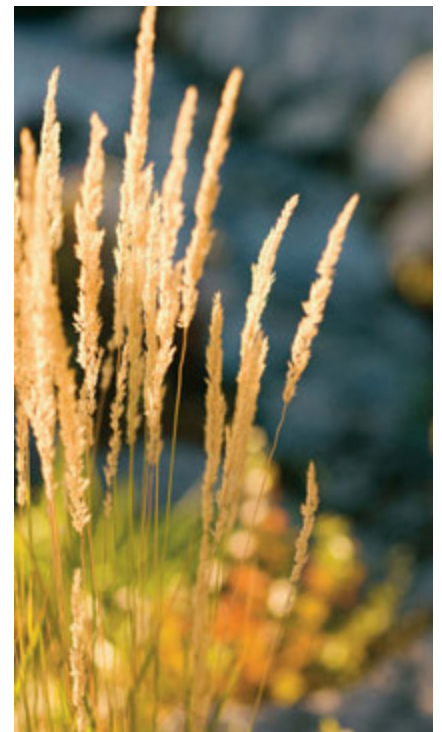
In our weakened moments, the adversary seeks to steal our spiritual



courage faltered. The scripture reads, “*After* they had tasted of the fruit they were *ashamed*, because of those [who] were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.”²⁶

As disciples of Christ, we stand apart from the world. There may be times we feel uncomfortable as the fingers of scorn mock and dismiss what is sacred to us.²⁷ President Thomas S. Monson warned, “Unless the roots of your testimony are firmly planted, it will be difficult for you to withstand the ridicule of those who challenge your faith.”²⁸ Nephi said, “[Heed] them not.”²⁹ Paul admonished, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; . . . Be not . . . ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.”³⁰ We never leave Him.

While accompanying President Dieter F. Uchtdorf to Eastern Europe last year, I marveled at the faith and courage of the Saints. One priesthood leader in Ukraine told us of being called to the branch presidency in the spring of 1994, only six months after his baptism. This would require



promises. If we are not watchful, our injured, childlike spirit will retreat back into the cold, dark crust of our former bloated ego, leaving behind the warm, healing light of the Savior.

When Parley P. Pratt, in 1835, was judged unfairly, bringing embarrassment and shame to him and his family, the Prophet Joseph Smith counseled, “Parley, . . . walk such things under your feet . . . [and] God Almighty shall be with you.”¹⁷

Another example: In 1830, Frederick G. Williams, a prominent medical doctor, was baptized. He immediately gave of his talents and prosperity to the Church. He became a leader in the Church. He donated property for the Kirtland Temple. In 1837, caught up in difficulties of the times, Frederick G. Williams made serious mistakes. The Lord declared in a revelation that “in consequence of [his] transgressions [his] former standing [in the leadership of the Church had] been taken away from [him].”¹⁸

The beautiful lesson we learn from Frederick G. Williams is that “whatever his personal weaknesses, he had the strength of character to [renew] his loyalty to the [Lord,] the Prophet and . . . to the Church, when it would have been so easy to have disintegrated in bitterness.”¹⁹ In the spring of 1840, he presented himself at a general conference, humbly asking forgiveness for his past conduct and expressing his determination to do the will of God

in the future. His case was presented by Hyrum Smith, and he was freely forgiven. He died a faithful member of the Church.

I recently met the president of the Recife Brazil Temple, whose name is Frederick G. Williams. He recounted how his great-great-grandfather’s decision of character had blessed the family and hundreds of his posterity.

Choose Not to Be Ashamed

Offended has a corrosive companion called *ashamed*.

In the Book of Mormon, we learn of Lehi’s vision of the tree of life. The vision speaks of those noble souls who “[pressed] forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron,” arriving and “[partaking] of the fruit of the tree.”²⁰

Nephi described the tree as “the love of God,”²¹ bearing fruit that “filled [the] soul with exceedingly great joy.”²²

After tasting of the fruit, Lehi saw “a great and spacious building . . . filled with people . . . old and young, . . . male and female; and their . . . dress was exceedingly fine; and they were . . . mocking and pointing their fingers [of scorn] towards those who . . . were partaking of the fruit.”²³ An angel explained that the mocking, the scoffing, the fingers of scorn represented the pride and wisdom of the world.²⁴

Nephi declared plainly, “We heeded them not.”²⁵

Sadly, there were others whose



becoming public with his faith and helping to register the Church in the city of Dnipropetrovsk. It was at a time of uncertainty in Ukraine, and openly showing faith in Christ and in the restored gospel could mean difficulty, including the possibility of losing his job as a pilot.

The priesthood leader told us, “I prayed and prayed. I had a testimony, and I had made a covenant. I knew what the Lord wanted me to do.”³¹ Courageously, he and his wife went forward with faith, unashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Where Much Is Given, Much Is Required

Some ask, “Do I have to be so different from others?” “Can’t I be a disciple of Christ without thinking so much about my behavior?” “Can’t I love Christ without keeping the law of chastity?” “Can’t I love Him and do what I want on Sunday?” Jesus gave a simple answer: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”³²

Some ask, “Aren’t there many of other faiths who love Christ?” Of course there are! However, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints, having a witness of His reality not only from the Bible but also from the Book of Mormon; knowing His priesthood has been restored to the earth; having made sacred covenants to follow Him and received the gift of the Holy Ghost; having been endowed with power in His holy temple; and being part of preparing for His glorious return to the earth, we cannot compare what we are to be with those who have not yet received these truths. “Unto whom much is given much is required.”³³

The Lord said, “Thou mayest choose for thyself.”³⁴

I promise you, as you choose not to be offended or ashamed, you will feel His love and approval. You will know that you are becoming more like Him.³⁵

Will we understand everything? Of course not. We will put some issues on the shelf to be understood at a later time.

Will everything be fair? It will not. We will accept some things we cannot fix and forgive others when it hurts.

Will we feel separated on occasion from those around us? Absolutely.

Will we be astonished at times to see the anger a few feel toward the Lord’s Church and their efforts to steal the struggling faith of the weak?³⁶ Yes. But this will not deter the growth or destiny of the Church, nor need it impede the spiritual progress of each of us as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never Leave Him

I love these words from a favorite hymn:

*The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for
repose
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should
endeavor to shake,
I’ll never, no never, I’ll never, no never,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake!*³⁷

Perfection does not come in this life, but we exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and keep our covenants. President Monson has promised, “Your testimony, when constantly nourished, will keep you safe.”³⁸ We push our spiritual roots deep, feasting daily on the words of Christ in the scriptures. We trust in the words of living

prophets, placed before us to show us the way. We pray and pray and listen to the quiet voice of the Holy Ghost that leads us along and speaks peace to our soul. Whatever challenges arise, we never, never leave Him.

The Savior asked His Apostles, “Will ye also go away?”³⁹

Peter answered:

“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

“... We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”⁴⁰

I too have that witness. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Mark 13:33.

2. Doctrine and Covenants 46:8.

3. Doctrine and Covenants 42:76.

4. 2 Peter 3:17.

5. John 6:66.

6. John 6:67.

7. Matthew 26:22.

8. 3 Nephi 9:14.

9. Matthew 22:37.

10. Mark 8:34.

11. Matthew 18:3; see also Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17; 3 Nephi 9:22; 11:37–38.

12. Mosiah 3:19.

13. See Alma 5:14.

14. John 6:61.

15. Matthew 13:21.

16. See David A. Bednar, “And Nothing Shall Offend Them,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2006, 89–92.

17. Joseph Smith, in *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt*, ed. Parley P. Pratt Jr. (1938), 118.

18. In *History of the Church*, 3:46, footnote.

19. Frederick G. Williams, “Frederick Granger Williams of the First Presidency of the Church,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1972): 261.

20. 1 Nephi 8:24.

21. 1 Nephi 11:25.

22. 1 Nephi 8:12.

23. 1 Nephi 8:26–27; see also verse 33.

24. See 1 Nephi 11:35–36; 12:18–19.

25. 1 Nephi 8:33.

26. 1 Nephi 8:28; emphasis added.

27. President Boyd K. Packer said, “Largely because of television [and the Internet],

instead of looking over into that spacious building, we are, in effect, living inside of it” (“Finding Ourselves in Lehi’s Dream,” *Liahona*, Aug. 2010, 29; *Ensign*, Aug. 2010, 23).

28. In the same talk, President Thomas S. Monson said, “The great and spacious building in Lehi’s vision represents those in the world who mock God’s word and who ridicule those who embrace it and who love the Savior and live the commandments” (“May You Have Courage,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 126).

29. 1 Nephi 8:33.

30. 2 Timothy 1:7–8.

31. From personal conversation and from a translated excerpt of an oral history by Alexander Davydov, recorded July 16, 2010.

32. John 14:15.

33. Doctrine and Covenants 82:3.

34. Moses 3:17.

35. See 1 Nephi 19:9.

36. See 2 Nephi 28:20.

37. “How Firm a Foundation,” *Hymns*, no. 85.

38. Thomas S. Monson, *Liahona* and *Ensign*, May 2009, 126.

39. John 6:67.

40. John 6:68–69.

