

Press forward in Christ

"Wherefore," the prophet Nephi says, "ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

"And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God" (2 Nephi 31:20-21).

Part of our mortal training is to walk by faith, repent of our sins, and call upon the Lord in daily prayer. We rejoice in the moments when promptings by the Holy Ghost are kindly given, and we are urged along the proper path of life. But each of us faces many difficult times here in mortality. All sorts of voices are screaming at us from the stadiums of public opinion. Our course will never be the popular way of the world. There are obstacles strewn in our path upon which we may sprain an ankle or stub a toe. But we must keep going. We move on in the strength of the Lord, each accountable for our own performance at the end of

our mortal race. We must be able to declare with Paul:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

I am so grateful for my eternal companion and for the second generation of Latter-day Saints in our family who have also taken up the cause of Christ. May God help all of us to partake of the fulness of the restoration of this sacred gospel, I pray humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard Elders Dean L. Larsen and Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

We shall all stand now and sing two verses of "Come, Come, Ye Saints," following which we shall hear from Elder John Baird Dickson, a new member of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation sang "Come, Come, Ye Saints."

Elder John B. Dickson

My dear brethren of the priesthood, it is sincerely a great pleasure to stand before you this evening and share with you the feelings and gratitude that I have to know that God lives and that he loves us, that Jesus Christ is our Elder Brother and Savior, and that there is a prophet on the earth who can authoritatively say, "Thus saith the Lord." I treat with great reverence and humility the fact that the Lord has called me to serve as a Seventy and to witness to the world that Jesus is the Christ, and I will do

my very best to move the work ahead wherever I am assigned to labor.

I would like to speak to you about the importance of service in the kingdom of God and the importance of full-time missionary service in the lives of our young men and older couples.

Faith to overcome bone cancer and serve a mission

Without appearing to be self-serving, I would like to tell you young men

of the Aaronic Priesthood a little about my call to a full-time mission. The year was 1962, and a call was received from President David O. McKay to serve in the Mexican Mission. Shortly after receiving the call, I learned that I had bone cancer in my right arm and that the probability of my living many weeks was extremely low. A blessing was received from a wonderful father, wherein he blessed me with my life and that the mission call would be fulfilled and that I would have a family and be able to serve the Lord all my days.

The doctor congratulated me on being one who had great faith in the Savior but assured me that I didn't realize the seriousness of what I had. As some of you have noticed, I have only one arm as a result of that problem; but ten months after having my arm amputated, I entered the Mexican Mission full of excitement and ready to work. You see, young men, I had several years earlier committed to the Lord that I would serve a full-time mission and that I would not let anything stop me from fulfilling that call. Well, brethren, the doctor passed away twenty years ago, always amazed to see me still breathing, and he actually became quite interested in the Church.

Blessings of having only one arm

Brethren, I want you to know that having one arm for nearly thirty years has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. It hasn't been my greatest challenge, but it has been a great teacher to me, teaching me to be more patient and tolerant with others as I have had to learn to be more patient with myself. It has helped me to understand the necessity of our having challenges in life to help develop our character and stamina, helping us to become what the Lord ultimately wants us to become.

Our challenges may be physical, spiritual, economic, or emotional, but

if we will treat them as opportunities and stepping-stones in our progress, rather than barriers and stumbling blocks, our lives and growth will be wonderful. I have learned that between challenges it is very restful but that any real growth I have ever enjoyed has always come with a challenge.

"The Oyster"

There's a little poem by an unknown author that we might think about when problems come our way. It is called "The Oyster."

There once was an oyster
Whose story I'll tell,
Who found that some sand
Had worked under his shell.
Just one little grain
But it gave him a pain,
For oysters have feelings
That are very plain.
Now did he berate
This working of fate,
That left him in such a
Deplorable state?
Did he curse the government,
Call for an election,
And say that the sea
Should have some protection?
No! He said to himself
As he sat on the shelf,
"Since I cannot remove it,
I think I'll improve it."
Well, years passed by,
As years always do,
Till he came to his destiny,
Oyster stew!
But the small grain of sand
That bothered him so
Was a beautiful pearl
All richly aglow.
Now this tale has a moral,
For isn't it grand,
What an oyster can do
With a small grain of sand?
And what couldn't we do
If we'd only begin
With all of the things
That get under our skin?

Commit to serve a mission

Young men, how are you going to meet the challenges that face you and that might jeopardize an opportunity to serve? It might be vocational opportunities, a car, a girlfriend, an assorted variety of sins, or a myriad of other reasons. For the older brethren it might be a yacht, camper, fishing plans, or maybe not wanting to miss some expected weddings and births. Whatever your individual challenges might be, I would invite you this very night to get on your knees and commit to your Heavenly Father that you will not allow anything to stop you from fulfilling that wonderful opportunity to serve a full-time mission. If you haven't been called, let your bishop know of your desire to serve.

When in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew the Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (25:40), he was talking about the importance of being of service to our fellowmen if we want to be worthy of his presence. What better way could there be to serve and to sacrifice than to accept a full-time mission call? At the same time, please realize that there are some handicaps and limitations that make other types of local service more practical than serving a full-time mission.

In the priesthood session of April conference, Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, "Now, my brethren, 'these are [your] days' (Hclaman 7:9) in the history of the Church" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, p. 57; or *Ensign*, May 1992, p. 39). Yes, my young brethren, these are your days to be a part of 50,000, 75,000, and 100,000 missionaries serving in the army of the Lord, armed with peace, righteousness, and power.

Life isn't intended to be easy

While presiding over the Mexico City North Mission in the late seventies, we decided to open the work in an area called the Huasteca, where there was only one Latter-day Saint family in a vast area with several communities and small cities. After two years there were five hundred members of the Church in five branches and an organized district. This was done by a handful of nineteen- and twenty-year-old faithful missionaries and two wonderful couples, who gave of themselves to see that others of Heavenly Father's children might know and understand.

After the missionaries had been in the Huasteca for about three weeks, we received a phone call from one of them, and we could tell that he was slightly discouraged, not having yet received any mail, being in a hot area with high humidity, and learning about a culture that was new to all of us. After we had talked for a minute or two, I reminded him that we had talked about the fact that it wouldn't be easy. He said, "Oh, that's right, President; that's right. It wouldn't be easy. I knew it wouldn't be easy." Well, he went ahead with great enthusiasm and concluded his very successful work there and was released to return home.

A couple of months later, while he was at BYU, he and some of his former companions called Sister Dickson and me at the mission home in Mexico City at 2:30 in the morning, waking us from a very sound sleep. After a short conversation, I mentioned the fact that it was wonderful to talk with them but that it seemed a little late at night to be calling. He said, "I know, President, but you knew it wouldn't be easy."

Brethren, life is not intended to be easy, but I promise those that labor faithfully in the service of their fellowmen, and with determination handle every challenge properly and under the

influence of the Spirit, that they will be blessed with feelings of happiness which will permeate their whole souls. And these, my brethren, are blessings that mold and build us and that can never be taken away.

I leave you with my testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and my testimony of the blessings which accompany unself-

ish service and hard work that is done in his holy name, and I say it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Elder John Baird Dickson of the Seventy.

President Thomas S. Monson will now speak to us.

President Thomas S. Monson

What a glorious sight is before me tonight! Here in the Tabernacle on Temple Square, in the Assembly Hall, at the BYU Marriott Center, and gathered together in chapels scattered throughout the world is a mighty army of men—even the royal army of the Lord. We have been entrusted with the priesthood. We have been prepared for duty. We have been called to serve.

Samuel's response to the Lord's call

The experience of the boy Samuel, as he responded to the Lord's call, has ever been an inspiration to me, as it has no doubt been to each holder of the priesthood. We remember that the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. One evening as the boy slept, the Lord called him by name: "Samuel." And he answered, "Here am I." Thinking that Eli had called him, Samuel ran to him and repeated the declaration, "Here am I." He was advised to return to his sleep.

Three times the voice of the Lord came to him, with the same response. Then the Lord called a fourth time, repeating the boy's name twice: "Samuel, Samuel."

The lad's answer, as before, is a classic example for you and me. He responded:

"Speak; for thy servant heareth.

"And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which

both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle" (see 1 Samuel 3:1-11).

Young men, respond as Samuel

Most of you young men will one day receive a call to serve a mission. How I pray that your response will be as was Samuel's: "Here am I. . . . Speak; for thy servant heareth." Then will heavenly help be yours. Every missionary strives to be the missionary his mother thinks he is, the missionary his father hopes he is—even the missionary the Lord knows he can become.

I remember a missionary recommendation for one young man on which the bishop had written: "This candidate is the finest I have ever recommended. He has served as an officer in the deacons, teachers, and priests quorums of which he has been a member. He excelled scholastically and athletically in high school. I know of no finer young man. P.S. I am proud to be his father." President Spencer W. Kimball, then chairman of the Missionary Committee, mused, "I hope his parents will be content with his assigned mission. I know of no opening for him this morning in the celestial kingdom."

The temple in South Africa

Yes, sometimes expectations of those who love us are a bit beyond our capacity. Years ago, before a temple was completed in South Africa, the