

President Harold B. Lee said, "We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet . . . [and quoting from the Doctrine and Covenants] 'as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.' (D&C 21:4-5.)"

He continued:

"There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. . . .

" . . . Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow the ones whom the Lord has placed to preside over his church" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1970, pp. 152-53; or *Improvement Era*, Dec. 1970; pp. 126-27).

From a personal standpoint, of what value is it to have living prophets if we do not heed their counsel?

Fathers and mothers, it is not too late to change. There is still hope. You can begin today to apply these suggestions and others you may add. We can help our children and grandchildren to

survive spiritually and morally in a world where the pollution index continues to spiral upward. The intent is not to take our children out of the world but, as the Lord prayed, to keep them from evil (see John 17:15).

I know that our Heavenly Father lives. We are his spirit children, and He loves his family.

Jesus is the Christ, and this is his church, which is led by living prophets.

Of this I sincerely testify in the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.

President Hinckley

We have heard from Bishop Robert D. Hales, Presiding Bishop of the Church, and Elder Joe J. Christensen of the Presidency of the Seventy.

The choir and congregation will now join in singing "The Spirit of God like a Fire Is Burning," following which we shall hear from Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Seventy.

The chorus and congregation sang "The Spirit of God."

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland

This morning I would like to greet and speak not only to the members of the Church but also to those not of our faith who may be participating in the radio or television audience. Thank you for joining with us on this beautiful fall morning.

Our contemporary "Black Plague"

Life in every era has had its troubles. Surely the Dark Ages were appropriately named, and not one of us is anxious to be transported back even to those later years of, say, the Hundred Years' War or the Black Plague. No,

we're quite happy to have been born in a century of unprecedented material blessings and abundant living; yet in community after community, in small nations and large, we see individuals and families facing heightened anxiety and fear. It would seem that discouragement, depression, and despair are our contemporary "Black Plague." Ours is, as Jesus said it would be, a time of distress with perplexity (see Luke 21:25).

We know that some of the world's most painful suffering is done in silence, in the sorrow of a lonely life. But some of it has more violent expression. Millions around the world are, as one observer

put it, "angry, armed and dangerous." In too many cities, drive-by shootings are becoming as common as drive-through laundries, and too many youngsters are packing a gun to school the way they used to pack a lunch.

There is an increasing feeling that time is out of joint, that no one seems wise enough or strong enough to set it right. In many cases, governments are in office but not in power, community values and neighborhood pride are often superficial or nonexistent, and too frequently the home is an alarming failure.

Furthermore, many of the social and political medicines of our day regularly miss the mark, so those would-be physicians stand by the bedside of "feverish and delirious humanity, outwitted, discredited, dumbfounded . . . , not knowing in which direction deliverance must be sought" (Charles Edward Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus* [Salt Lake City: Parliament Publishers, 1968], p. 17).

Turn to God for deliverance

If I may be so bold this morning, may I suggest "direction for deliverance"? In words of one syllable, we need to turn to God. We need to reaffirm our faith, and we need to reassert our hope. Where necessary we need to repent, and certainly we need to pray. It is the absence of spiritual fidelity that has led us to moral disarray in the twilight of the twentieth century. We have sown the wind of religious skepticism, and we are reaping the whirlwind of existential despair.

Without our religious faith, without recognizing the reality and necessity of spiritual life, the world makes no sense, and a nonsense world is a place of horror. Only if the world has meaning at a spiritual level is it possible for human beings to keep going, to keep trying. As Hamlet so wisely implored, so should we: "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" (act 1, scene 4, line 39).

My testimony today is of the angels and ministers of grace who will always defend us if, as the prophet Alma commanded us, we "take care of . . . sacred things," we "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47). More prayer and humility, more faith and forgiveness, more repentance and revelation and reinforcement from heaven—these are where we seek remedy and deliverance for "feverish and delirious humanity."

God's limitless love

I testify this morning of God's limitless love for his children, of his unquenchable desire to help us heal our wounds, individually and collectively. He is our Father, and Wordsworth wrote more than he knew when he said we came to earth "trailing clouds of glory . . . from God, who is our home" ("Ode: Intimations of Immortality," lines 64–65). But in far too many cases we find no modern belief in a Heavenly Father, and when there is a belief, it is too often an erroneous one. God is not dead, and he is not an absentee landlord. God is not uncaring, or capricious, or cantankerous. Above all, he is not some sort of divine umpire trying to call us out at third base.

The first and great commandment on earth is for us to love God with all our heart, might, mind, and strength (see D&C 59:5; Matthew 22:37) because surely the first and great promise in heaven is that he will always love us that way.

God's sorrow for those who suffer

So much of what so many think about God (if they think about him at all) must make him weep. In fact, we know it makes him weep. Could there be a more tender scene than this exchange recorded by Moses?

"And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; . . .

"And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? [How is it thou canst weep?]

"The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, . . . and . . . gave I unto man his agency; . . .

"And unto [them] have I . . . given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; . . .

" . . . The whole heavens . . . weep over them . . . ; wherefore should not the heavens weep, seeing these [who] suffer?" (Moses 7:28, 29, 32–33, 37).

God is anxious to bless us

Angels and ministers of grace to defend us? They are all about us, and their holy sovereign, the Father of us all, is divinely anxious to bless us this very moment. Mercy is his mission, and love is his only labor. John Donne said once:

"We ask . . . our daily bread, and God never says, 'You should have come yesterday.' [No, he says,] 'Today if you will hear [my] voice, today [I] will hear [yours].' [If] thou hast been benighted till now, wintered and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damp and benumbed, smothered and stupefied till now, . . . God [yet] comes to thee, not as in the dawning of the day, . . . but as the sun at [full] noon, to [banish] all shadows" (in *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, 10 vols. [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953], 6:172; spelling and punctuation modernized).

Alma taught that truth to his son Helaman, entreating him to put his trust in God. He said that God was "quick to hear the cries of his people, and [quick] to answer their prayers." Out of very personal experience, Alma testified, "I have been supported [in] trials and troubles [and afflictions] of

every kind . . . ; God has delivered me. . . . I do put my trust in him, and he will still deliver me" (Alma 9:26; 36:27).

My witness this morning is that he will deliver all the rest of us too, that he will deliver the entire human family if we will but "take care of sacred things," if we will "look to God and live" (Alma 37:47).

The greatest affirmation of that promise ever given in this world was the gift of God's perfect and precious First-born Son, a gift given not in condemnation of the world, but to soothe and save and make the world secure: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should *not* perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16; italics added).

Katie Lewis trusts Jesus

Katie Lewis is my neighbor. Her father, Randy, is my bishop; her mother, Melanie, is a saint. And her older brother, Jimmie, is battling leukemia.

Sister Lewis recently recounted for me the unspeakable fear and grief that came to their family when Jimmie's illness was diagnosed. She spoke of the tears and the waves of sorrow that any mother would experience with a prognosis as grim as Jimmie's was. But like the faithful Latter-day Saints they are, the Lewises turned to God with urgency and with faith and with hope. They fasted and prayed, prayed and fasted. And they went again and again to the temple.

One day Sister Lewis came home from a temple session weary and worried, feeling the impact of so many days—and nights—of fear being held at bay only by *monumental* faith.

As she entered her home, four-year-old Katie ran up to her with love in her eyes and a crumpled sheaf of papers in her hand. Holding the papers out to her mother, she said enthusiastically, "Mommy, do you know what these are?"

Sister Lewis said frankly her first impulse was to deflect Katie's zeal and say she didn't feel like playing just then.

But she thought of her children—all her children—and the possible regret of missed opportunities and little lives that pass too swiftly. So she smiled through her sorrow and said, “No, Katie. I don’t know what they are. Please tell me.”

“They are the scriptures,” Katie beamed back, “and do you know what they say?”

Sister Lewis stopped smiling, gazed deeply at this little child, knelt down to her level, and said, “Tell me, Katie. What do the scriptures say?”

“They say, ‘Trust Jesus.’” And then she was gone.

Sister Lewis said that as she stood back up, holding a fistful of her four-year-old’s scribbling, she felt near-tangible arms of peace encircle her weary soul and a divine stillness calm her troubled heart.

Katie Lewis, “angel and minister of grace,” I’m with you. In a world of some discouragement, sorrow, and overmuch sin, in times when fear and despair seem to prevail, when humanity is feverish

with no worldly physicians in sight, I too say, “Trust Jesus.” Let him still the tempest and ride upon the storm. Believe that he can lift mankind from its bed of affliction, in time and in eternity.

Oh, dearly, dearly has he loved!
And we must love him too,
And trust in his redeeming blood,
And try his works to do.
[“There Is a Green Hill Far Away,”
Hymns, no. 194]

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The chorus sang “The Morning Breaks.”

President Hinckley

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Seventy has spoken to us, following which the chorus sang “The Morning Breaks, the Shadows Flee.”

Elder Spencer J. Condie of the Seventy will now speak to us.

Elder Spencer J. Condie

A few years ago, as Sister Condie and I exited the Tabernacle, a lovely sister approached us and said with a very cheerful voice, “Good morning, President Hinckley.” I replied, “I’m sorry to disappoint you, my dear, but I’m Elder Condie of the Seventy.” Her cheerful countenance was crestfallen. Not more than a minute later, we met another sister who greeted us with the same salutation: “Good morning, President Hinckley.” Not wishing to cause her the same disappointment I caused the previous sister, I shook her hand and said, “Bless you, my dear. Have a nice day.”

Several months later I confessed my sin to President Gordon B. Hinckley during a regional conference in Portugal, and in his typically loving way he

said, “Well, Spencer, if you’re going to impersonate me, I hope you behave yourself.”

Be ye perfect

The Savior has given each of us the soul-stretching commandment not only to behave ourselves but to become perfect, even as He and His Father are perfect (see Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48). Sometimes this quest for perfection tries our patience and our faith as we continue to wrestle with the weaknesses of the flesh. But a loving Heavenly Father has not left us alone in our battle with the adversary. A recurrent doctrine of the Book of Mormon is that the Holy Ghost is an active participant in our lives, influencing us for good.