

As a hopeless cripple, William Ernest Henley courageously looked beyond his outward physical condition to triumph in his heart and mind when he wrote "Invictus":

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud:
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed....

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.¹⁴

Brethren, I testify with all my heart and soul that through the power of self-mastery we will inherit the blessings our Heavenly Father has for his faithful sons. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Ether 12:27.
2. In Angela Partington, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed. (1996), 368.

3. 2 Corinthians 12:7.
4. *The Meaning of Service* (1920), 83.
5. "Sir Galahad," lines 3-4.
6. *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 4, lines 166-71.
7. Roderick L. Cameron, *Tenacity*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (1 Dec. 1964), 3.
8. David C. Call, *Success—Spiritual and Temporal*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (30 Nov. 1965), 5-6.
9. Cameron, *Tenacity*, 2.
10. "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow," *Hymns*, no. 242.
11. In Conference Report, Apr. 1900, 61.
12. See Cameron, *Tenacity*, 2-3.
13. *Gospel Ideals* (1953), 390.
14. "Invictus. In Mem. R.T.H.B.," as quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 332.

The choir and congregation sang "Ye Elders of Israel."

President Hinckley

It will now be our pleasure to hear from President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency.

President Thomas S. Monson

Priesthood holders can make a difference

One of my most vivid memories was attending priesthood meeting as a newly ordained deacon and singing the opening hymn, "Come, all ye sons of God who have received the priesthood."¹⁵ Tonight, to the capacity audience assembled in this magnificent Conference Center and in chapels worldwide, I echo the spirit of that special hymn and say to you, "Come, all ye sons of God who have received the

priesthood, let us consider our callings, let us reflect on our responsibilities, let us determine our duty, and let us follow Jesus Christ our Lord."

While we may differ in age, in custom, or in nationality, we are united as one in our priesthood callings.

As bearers of the priesthood, we have been placed on earth in troubled times. We live in a complex world, with currents of conflict everywhere to be found. Po-

litical machinations ruin the stability of nations, despots grasp for power, and segments of our society seem forever down-trodden, deprived of opportunity, and left with a feeling of failure.

We who have been ordained to the priesthood of God can make a difference. When we qualify for the help of the Lord, we can build boys. We can mend men. We can accomplish miracles in His holy service. Our opportunities are without limit.

We must be worthy to receive God's help

Though the task seems large, we are strengthened by this truth: "The greatest force in this world today is the power of God as it works through man." If we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. That divine help, however, is predicated upon our worthiness. To sail safely the seas of mortality, to perform a human rescue mission, we need the guidance of that eternal mariner—even the great Jehovah. We reach out, we reach up to obtain heavenly help.

Are our reaching hands clean? Are our yearning hearts pure? Looking backward in time through the pages of history, a lesson on worthiness is gleaned from the words of the dying King Darius. "Darius, . . . through the proper rites had been recognized as legitimate King of Egypt; his rival Alexander [the Great] had been declared . . . legitimate Son of Amon—he too was Pharaoh. . . . Alexander[, finding] the defeated Darius on the point of death . . . , laid his hands upon his head to heal him, commanding him to arise and resume his kingly power, . . . concluding . . . : 'I swear unto thee, Darius, by all the gods that I do these things truly and without faking. . . .' [Darius] replied with a gentle rebuke: 'Alexander my boy . . . do you think you can touch heaven with those hands of yours?'"²

Removing the barnacles of sin

An inspiring lesson is learned from a "Viewpoint" article which appeared some time ago in the *Church News*. May I quote:

"To some it may seem strange to see ships of many nations loading and unloading cargo along the docks at Portland, Ore. That city is 100 miles from the ocean. Getting there involves a difficult, often turbulent passage over the bar guarding the Columbia River and a long trip up the Columbia and Willamette Rivers.

"But ship captains like to tie up at Portland. They know that as their ships travel the seas, a curious saltwater shellfish called a barnacle fastens itself to the hull and stays there for the rest of its life, surrounding itself with a rocklike shell. As more and more [of these] barnacles attach themselves, they increase the ship's drag, slow its progress, decrease its efficiency.

"Periodically, the ship must go into dry dock, where with great effort the barnacles are chiseled or scraped off. It's a difficult, expensive process that ties up the ship for days.

"But not if the captain can get his ship to Portland. Barnacles can't live in fresh water. There, in the sweet, fresh waters of the Willamette or Columbia, the barnacles [die and some] fall away, [while those that remain are easily removed. Thus,] the ship returns to its task lightened and renewed.

"Sins are like those barnacles. Hardly anyone goes through life without picking up some. They increase the drag, slow our progress, decrease our efficiency. Unrepented, building up one on another, they can eventually sink us.

"In His infinite love and mercy, our Lord has provided a harbor where, through repentance, our barnacles fall

away and are forgotten. With our souls lightened and renewed, we can go efficiently about our work and His.”³

We are on the Lord's errand

The priesthood represents a mighty army of righteousness—even a royal army. We are led by a prophet of God, even President Gordon B. Hinckley. In supreme command is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our marching orders are clear. They are concise. Matthew describes our challenge in these words from the Master:

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”⁴

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them.”⁵

The call to serve has ever characterized the work of the Lord. It rarely comes at a convenient time. It prompts humility; it invites prayer; it inspires commitment. The call came—to Kirtland. Revelations followed. The call came—to Missouri. Persecution prevailed. The call came—to Nauvoo. Prophets died. The call came—to the basin of the Great Salt Lake. Hardship beckoned.

That long journey, made under such difficult circumstances, was a trial of faith. But faith forged in the furnace of trials and tears is marked by trust and testimony. Only God can count the sacrifice; only He can measure the sorrow; only He can know the hearts of those who serve Him—then and now.

Lessons from the past can quicken our memories, touch our lives, and direct our actions. We are prompted to pause and remember that divinely given promise: “Wherefore, . . . ye are on the

Lord's errand; and whatever ye do according to the will of the Lord is the Lord's business.”⁶

Befriending Mrs. Shinas

Many in this vast audience of priesthood bearers are holders of the Aaronic Priesthood—even deacons, teachers, and priests. Young men, some lessons in life are learned from your parents, while others you learn in school or in church. There are, however, certain moments when you know our Heavenly Father is doing the teaching and you are His student. The thoughts we think, the feelings we feel—even the deeds we do in boyhood—can affect our lives forever.

When I was a deacon, I loved baseball. In fact, I still do. I had a fielder’s glove inscribed with the name *Mel Ott*. He was the premier player of my day. My friends and I would play ball in a small alleyway behind the houses where we lived. Our playing field was cramped, but all right, provided you hit straightaway to center field. However, if you hit the ball to the right of center, disaster was at the door. Here lived Mrs. Shinas, who, from her kitchen window, would watch us play; and as soon as the ball rolled to her porch, her large dog would retrieve the ball and present it to her as she opened the door. Into her house Mrs. Shinas would return and add the ball to the many she had previously confiscated. She was our nemesis, the destroyer of our fun—even the bane of our existence.

None of us had a good word for Mrs. Shinas, but we had plenty of bad words for her. None of us would speak to her, and she never spoke to us. She was hampered by a stiff leg which impaired her walking and must have caused her great pain. She and her husband had no children, lived secluded lives, and rarely came out of their house.

This private war continued for some time—perhaps two years—and then an

inspired thaw melted the ice of winter and brought a springtime of good feelings to the stalemate.

One evening as I performed my daily task of watering our front lawn, holding the nozzle of the hose in the hand as was the style at that time, I noticed that Mrs. Shinas's lawn was dry and beginning to turn brown. I honestly don't know, brethren, what came over me, but I took a few more minutes and, with our hose, watered her lawn. I continued to do this throughout the summer, and then when autumn came I hosed her lawn free of leaves as I did ours and stacked the leaves in piles at the street's edge to be gathered. During the entire summer I had not seen Mrs. Shinas. We boys had long since given up playing ball in the alleyway. We had run out of baseballs and had no money to buy more.

Early one evening, Mrs. Shinas's front door opened, and she beckoned for me to jump the small fence and come to her front porch. This I did. As I approached her, she invited me into her living room, where I was asked to sit in a comfortable chair. She treated me to cookies and milk. Then she went to the kitchen and returned with a large box filled with baseballs and softballs, representing several seasons of her confiscation efforts. The filled box was presented to me. The treasure, however, was not to be found in the gift but rather in her words. I saw for the first time a smile come across the face of Mrs. Shinas, and she said, "Tommy, I want you to have these baseballs, and I want to thank you for being kind to me." I expressed my own gratitude to her and walked from her home a better boy than when I entered. No longer were we enemies. Now we were friends. The Golden Rule had again succeeded.

Prepare this generation of missionaries

Fathers, bishops, quorum advisers—yours is the responsibility to prepare this

generation of missionaries, to quicken in the hearts of these deacons, teachers, and priests not only an awareness of their obligation to serve but also a vision of the opportunities and blessings which await them through a mission call. The work is demanding, the impact everlasting. This is no time for "summer soldiers" in the army of the Lord.

Each missionary who goes forth in response to a sacred call becomes a servant of the Lord, whose work this truly is. Do not fear, young men, for He will be with you. He never fails. He has promised: "I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."⁷

Brethren, we have no way of knowing when our privilege to extend a helping hand will unfold before us. The road to Jericho each of us travels bears no name, and the weary traveler who needs our help may be one unknown. Altogether too frequently the recipient of kindness shown fails to express his feelings, and we are deprived of a glimpse of greatness and a touch of tenderness that motivates us to go and do likewise.

The Lord's grace will help us succeed

Two thousand years ago, Jesus of Nazareth sat by a well in Samaria and talked there to a woman:

"Jesus . . . said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again:

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."⁸

Should there be anyone who feels he is too weak to change the onward and downward course of his life, or should there be those who fail to resolve to do better because of that greatest of fears, the fear of failure, there is no more comforting assurance to be had than the

words of the Lord: "My grace," said He, "is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them."⁹

Through humble prayer, diligent preparation, and faithful service, we can succeed in our sacred callings.

Be pure vessels in the Lord's service

Remember how the captains of oceangoing vessels burdened by the weight of barnacles set a course to the fresh waters of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers to rid themselves of these impediments of progress? Let us, in our own lives and in our service in the Lord's work, shed the barnacles of doubt, laziness, fear, and sin by plying the living waters of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know their names: faith, prayer, charity, obedience, and love—to identify but a few. The lighthouse of the Lord Jesus Christ marks the way. His beacon light will guide our course to celestial glory.

May we be wise mariners as we go forth on such a voyage. Let us be pure vessels before the Lord. Let us recognize and respond to the needs of the widow; the cry of the child; the plight of the unemployed; the burden of the sick, the confined, the aged, the poor, the hungry, the lame, and the forgotten. They are remembered by our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. May you and I follow Their divine examples. Heavenly peace will then be our blessing, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. "Come, All Ye Sons of God," *Hymns*, no. 322.

2. Quoted in Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt* (1981), 192.
3. "Harbor of Forgiveness," *Church News*, 30 Jan. 1988, 16.
4. Matthew 28:19–20.
5. Mark 16:20.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 64:29.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 84:88.
8. John 4:13–14.
9. Ether 12:27.

President Hinckley

President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, has just spoken to us.

We remind you that the Tabernacle Choir broadcast will be from 9:30 to 10:00 A.M. tomorrow morning. The Sunday morning session will immediately follow.

Daylight saving time begins tomorrow at 2:00 A.M. We encourage you to move your clocks ahead one hour before you go to bed this evening. But don't go to bed and then get up at 2:00 to move the clock.

As you leave this priesthood meeting tonight, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

We express our appreciation to the members of the Tabernacle Choir, joined by returned missionaries, for the beautiful music they have provided this evening.

Following my remarks, we will conclude this session with the choir singing "Beautiful Savior." The benediction will then be offered by Elder E. Ray Bateman of the Seventy.