

Susan Madsen tells the story of Agnes Caldwell in the Willie handcart company. They were caught in heavy storms and suffered terrible hunger and cold. Relief wagons came to deliver food and blankets, but there were not enough wagons to carry all the people. Even after rescue, the majority of the people still had to trudge on many more miles to the safety of the valley.

Little nine-year-old Agnes was too weary to walk any farther. The driver took notice of her determination to keep up with the wagon and asked if she would like a ride. She tells in her own words what happened next:

"At this he reached over, taking my hand, clucking to his horses to make me run, with legs that . . . could run no farther. On we went, to what to me seemed miles. What went through my head at that time was that he was the meanest man that ever lived or that I had ever heard of. . . . Just at what seemed the breaking point, he stopped [and pulled me into the wagon]. Taking a blanket, he wrapped me up . . . , warm and comfortable. Here I had time to change my mind, as I surely did, knowing full well by doing this he saved me from freezing when taken into the wagon" (in *I Walked to Zion* [1994], 59).

The driver of that relief wagon made the little girl run as far and as fast as she could to push blood back into her frozen feet and legs. He saved her legs, possibly her life, by letting her help herself.

Our children today have journeys as terrible and taxing as the westward migration. They are faced with every calamity along the trail. We need to build their backs to bear their burdens and build

their legs for dancing under starry skies. Sometimes we must run to keep up with our children's faith.

Speak the language of love to children

Another time in 3 Nephi when Christ was blessing the disciples, "his countenance did smile upon them, and the light of his countenance did shine upon them" (3 Nephi 19:25).

A smiling countenance says you are good. Children are trying to be like Jesus. They want to be like someone who smiles. They want to be with someone who responds to them joyfully.

President Hinckley has said: "Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 75; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 54).

This should be the language of gospel instruction to our children. Whatever your mother tongue, learn to teach and speak in the language of heartfelt prayers and joyful testimony so that angels, earthly and heavenly, can encircle and minister to us. We need gospel mentors who speak the language of praise and friendship. We need to give regular spiritual report cards that affirm our goodness in each other's eyes. It is a blessing to allow children to run as far as they can under their own power, to build strength for their own testimonies, and we should smile upon them and wrap them in the blanket of our affection throughout the great journey in the universal language of love.

I give thanks for the great blessing to "behold [our] little ones." I like to remember that children come too, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Robert D. Hales

Out of darkness into His marvelous light

Isaiah, a great prophet of the Old Testament, prophesied, "And it shall come to

pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and all nations shall flow unto it."¹ Referring to the

citizens of those nations, President John Taylor said, "They will come, saying, we do not know anything of the principles of your religion, but we perceive that you are an honest community; you administer justice and righteousness."²

As Salt Lake City has hosted the 2002 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, we have seen a partial fulfillment of many prophecies. The nations of the earth and many of their leaders have come. They have seen us serving alongside our friends in this community and our neighbors of other faiths. They have seen the light in our eyes and felt the clasp of our hands. "The mountain of the house of the Lord,"³ with its brightly lit spires, has been witnessed by 3.5 billion people around the world. The nations have heard the glorious sound of this Tabernacle Choir. Hundreds of thousands have attended a live production in this auditorium entitled *The Light of the World: A Celebration of Life—Spirit of Man, Glory of God*, which included a declaration of our belief in Jesus Christ. I humbly express gratitude that by these and many other means, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continues to be brought "forth out of obscurity and out of darkness."⁴

Throughout the Olympics there have been many expressions of light, such as the Olympic flame; the child of light; and the theme, "Light the Fire Within."⁵ Perhaps the most memorable light was found in the eyes of the competitors themselves. But what moved us most was not the competition or the spectacle. It was the deeper truth these things symbolized—the source of the light within each of us.

This morning I speak to those who asked, "What was that light I saw and felt? Where did it come from? How can I have it for myself and my loved ones always?"

Light of Christ and gift of the Holy Ghost

Each of us brings a light to the earth—the Light of Christ. "I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into

the world,"⁶ the Savior said. Through Him comes "the light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things."⁷

This light, which "inviteth and enticeth to do good continually,"⁸ is "given to every man, that he may know good from evil."⁹

By using the Light of Christ to discern and choose what is right, we can be led to an even greater light: the gift of the Holy Ghost. I testify that through the restoration of the gospel and the holy priesthood of God, disciples of Jesus Christ in these latter days have the power to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is bestowed by the laying on of hands by those who have the authority of the priesthood, and it is received by those who have followed the principles of faith and repentance and have received the ordinance of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins.

The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead, a personage of spirit.¹⁰ He is the Comforter, the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of Promise. He testifies of Jesus Christ, His work, and the work of His servants upon the earth. He acts as a cleansing agent to purify and sanctify us from sin.¹¹ He comforts us and brings peace to our souls. The right to His constant companionship is among the greatest gifts we can receive in mortality, for by the light of His promptings and His cleansing power we can be led back into the presence of God.¹²

Light dispels darkness

As children, we learned how to keep darkness away by turning on a light. Sometimes when our parents went away for the evening, we would turn on every light in the house! We understood the physical law that is also a spiritual law: light and darkness cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Light dispels darkness. When light is present, darkness is vanquished and must depart. More importantly, darkness cannot conquer light unless the light is dimin-

ished or departs. When the spiritual light of the Holy Ghost is present, the darkness of Satan departs.

Beloved young men and young women of the Church, we are engaged in a battle between the forces of light and darkness. If it were not for the Light of Jesus Christ and His gospel, we would be doomed to the destruction of darkness. But the Savior said, "I am come a light into the world."¹³ "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."¹⁴

The Lord is our light and, literally, our salvation.¹⁵ Like the sacred fire that encircled the children in 3 Nephi,¹⁶ His light will form a protective shield between you and the darkness of the adversary as you live worthy of it. You need that light. We need that light. Carefully study the scriptures and *For the Strength of Youth* and listen to the teachings of your parents and leaders. Then, by obedience to wise counsel, learn to claim the protective light of the gospel as your own.

You may wonder, "How can I do that?" There is only one way: you must learn to generate that light each day by believing on Jesus Christ and following His commandments.

Generating the light by daily pedaling

This past winter I had the opportunity to learn more about my lungs. I became very aware that we cannot store oxygen. We cannot save the air we need to breathe, no matter how hard we try. Moment by moment, breath by breath, our lives are granted to us and are renewed. So it is with spiritual light. It must be renewed in us on a regular basis. We must generate it day by day, thought by thought, and with daily righteous action if we are to keep the darkness of the adversary away.

When I was a boy, I used to ride my bicycle home from basketball practice at night. I would connect a small pear-shaped generator to my bicycle tire. Then as I pedaled, the tire would turn a tiny rotor,

which produced electricity and emitted a single, welcome beam of light. It was a simple but effective mechanism. But I had to pedal to make it work! I learned quickly that if I stopped pedaling my bicycle, the light would go out. I also learned that when I was "anxiously engaged"¹⁷ in pedaling, the light would become brighter and the darkness in front of me would be dispelled.

The generation of spiritual light comes from daily spiritual pedaling. It comes from praying, studying the scriptures, fasting, and serving—from living the gospel and obeying the commandments. "He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light,"¹⁸ said the Lord, "and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day."¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, that perfect day will be when we will stand in the presence of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Sometimes people ask, "Why do I have to go to sacrament meeting? Why do I have to live the Word of Wisdom, pay tithing? Why can't I have one foot in Babylon?" May I tell you why? Because spiritual pedaling takes both feet! Unless you are fully engaged in living the gospel—living it with all of your "heart, might, mind and strength"²⁰—you cannot generate enough spiritual light to push back the darkness.

And in this world the darkness is never far away. In fact, it is always just around the corner, waiting for an opportunity to come in. "If thou doest not well," the Lord said, "sin lieth at the door."²¹

It is as predictable as any physical law: if we let the light of the Spirit flicker or fade by failing to keep the commandments or by not partaking of the sacrament or praying or studying the scriptures, the darkness of the adversary will surely come in. "That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience."²²

In the scriptures we read that some individuals “grope in the dark without light” and “stagger like a drunken man.”²³ Stumbling along, we may become accustomed to the dimness of our surroundings and forget how glorious it is to walk in the light.

The path to the light

There is a way out of the “mists of darkness”²⁴ and onto the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. The Lord told Isaiah, “I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them.”²⁵

The prophet Nephi outlined the path: “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism . . . , behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.”²⁶

The covenant we make at baptism and renew as we partake of the sacrament—to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ, always remember Him, and keep His commandments—includes the promise that we will always have His Spirit, that we will always have that light to be with us.²⁷ The emblems of the Savior’s Atonement remind us that we need not stumble in darkness. We can have His light with us always.

“Let your light so shine”

Growing up on Long Island, in New York, I understood how vital light was to those traveling in the darkness on the open sea. How dangerous is a fallen lighthouse! How devastating is a lighthouse whose light has failed!

We who have the gift of the Holy Ghost must be true to its promptings so we can be a light to others.

“Let your light so shine before men,” said the Lord, “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”²⁸

We never know who may be depending on us. And, as the Savior said, we “know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I shall heal them; and ye shall be the means of bringing salvation unto them.”²⁹

A special witness of His light

Now, my brothers and sisters, in this, the last great conflict between light and darkness, I am grateful for the opportunity to “endure hardness, as a [disciple] of Jesus Christ.”³⁰ With Paul, I declare, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”³¹ I bear my special witness that Jesus Christ “is the light and the life of the world; yea, [the] light that is endless, that can never be darkened.”³²

He is the Light of Bethlehem, born of Mary, His mortal mother, and His Father, Almighty God.

He is the Light who was baptized by immersion by John the Baptist, upon whom the Holy Ghost was manifest in the spirit like a dove descending.

He is the Light in whom His Father was well pleased.

He is the Light at the head of the ancient Church, organized with Twelve Apostles, prophets, and Seventies.

He is the Light of the Atonement, fulfilled in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha, who took upon Himself the sins of the world, that all mankind may obtain eternal salvation.

He is the Light of the empty tomb, the resurrected Lord with a glorified body of flesh and bone, who broke the bands of

death and gained an everlasting victory over the grave.

He is the Light that ascended into heaven before the eyes of His disciples, with a promise that in like manner He would come again.

He is the Light that appeared with His Father and restored, through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the same Church He established during His ministry on earth.

He is the Light that leads and guides this Church today through revelation to a prophet, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles.

He is *my* Light, *my* Redeemer, *my* Savior—and yours.

I know that God lives. I know that He hath called us “out of darkness into his marvellous light.”³³ I pray that the light of His restored gospel will continue to spread throughout the world so that all may have the opportunity to hear and choose, and that His Church will “come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun,” so that His “glory may fill the earth.”³⁴

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Isaiah 2:2.
2. John Taylor, *Deseret News: Semi-Weekly*, 27 Jan. 1880, 1.
3. Micah 4:1.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 1:30.
5. TMSalt Lake Olympic Committee.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 93:2.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 88:13.
8. Moroni 7:13.
9. Moroni 7:16.

10. See Articles of Faith 1:1; Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.
11. See Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost,” 704.
12. See John 14:16–18, 26–27.
13. John 12:46.
14. John 8:12.
15. See Psalm 27:1.
16. See 3 Nephi 17:24.
17. Doctrine and Covenants 58:27.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 93:28.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 50:24.
20. Doctrine and Covenants 4:2.
21. Genesis 4:7.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 93:39.
23. Job 12:25.
24. 1 Nephi 12:17.
25. Isaiah 42:16.
26. 2 Nephi 31:13.
27. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37, 77, 79.
28. Matthew 5:15–16.
29. 3 Nephi 18:32.
30. 2 Timothy 2:3.
31. Romans 13:12.
32. Mosiah 16:9.
33. 1 Peter 2:9.
34. Doctrine and Covenants 109:73–74.

The choir sang “Where Can I Turn for Peace?”

President Hinckley

We express appreciation to the choir for their beautiful music. Following my remarks, they will conclude by singing “Let Zion in Her Beauty Rise.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy.

President Gordon B. Hinckley

A call for greater faith

From where we speak, it is a beautiful April Sabbath morning. The tulips are well out of the ground and will soon be bursting into flowering beauty. In the

winter of our doubt there came the hope of spring. We knew it would come. Such was our faith, based on the experiences of earlier years.

And so it is with matters of the spirit and soul. As each man or woman walks