

children's hospitals. I hope you know how much you are loved by your family, your Primary teachers, and, most importantly, Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Never settle for less than the privileges and blessings God offers you. The standards you keep in your dress, your language, and your behavior are outward signs of your inward commitment to follow Heavenly Father's plan for you.

Your influence upon me is greater than you can imagine. Thank you for the joy and hope you bring into my heart and the hearts of your Primary leaders and especially your parents. Please remember to express your thanks to those who love and teach you. I know, and I want you to

know, you are a child of God, Heavenly Father loves you, and you can pray to Him anytime, anywhere. Try always to remember and follow Jesus Christ, and this will bring light and peace into your lives now and give you hope for the eternities. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. 3 Nephi 22:13.
2. "Teach Me to Walk in the Light," *Children's Songbook*, 177.
3. "Messages of Inspiration from President Hinckley," *Church News*, Sept. 4, 1999, 2.
4. Moses 1:13.
5. *Children's Songbook*, 177.
6. 3 Nephi 22:13.

## Elder Russell M. Nelson

### Reflections on Sister Nelson's passing

My dear brethren and sisters, since our last general conference, my sweetheart—my beloved wife for 59 years—passed away. While I was at home on a rare Saturday with no assignment, we had worked together. She had washed our clothing. I had helped to carry it, fold it, and put it in place. Then while we were sitting on the sofa, holding hands, enjoying a program on television, my precious Dantzel slipped peacefully into eternity. Her passing came suddenly and unexpectedly. Just four days earlier, our doctor's report at a routine checkup indicated that her laboratory tests were good. After my efforts to revive her proved fruitless, feelings of shock and sorrow overwhelmed me. My closest friend, angel mother of our 10 children, grandmother of our 56 grandchildren, had been taken from us.

Dantzel was not only a loved and loving companion. She was a teacher: by her noble example, she taught faith, virtue, obedience, and mercy. She taught me how

to listen and to love. Because of her, I know all the blessings that can come to a husband, father, and grandfather.

With deep gratitude I acknowledge the tremendous outpouring of love from dear friends across the world. Countless letters, calls, cards, and other messages have been sent. All tributes expressed loving admiration for her and sympathy for us whom she left behind. Those messages came in such large numbers that we, regretfully, were unable to respond to all of them individually. May I thank each and all for your great kindness toward us. Thank you so very, very much. Your expressions have brought much comfort through this time of heartache for our family. We really love dear Dantzel! We miss her!

From her sudden departure we can learn a very important lesson: now is the time to prepare to meet God. Tomorrow may be too late. Prophets through the ages have so declared: "This life is the time for men to prepare to meet God. . . . Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance."<sup>1</sup>

### The need to prepare now

Yet many do procrastinate.<sup>2</sup> A prophet warns us: “Ye cannot say . . . that I *will* repent, that I *will* return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will . . . possess your body in that eternal world.”<sup>3</sup> Another prophet adds, “He that is filthy shall be filthy still; and he that is righteous shall be righteous still.”<sup>4</sup>

Great is the knowledge that “whatever principle of intelligence we attain . . . in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection.”<sup>5</sup> From the Prophet Joseph Smith we also learn that “God has . . . a time . . . appointed . . . when He will bring all His subjects, who have obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, into His celestial rest. This rest<sup>6</sup> is of such perfection and glory, that man has need of a preparation before he can, according to the laws of that kingdom, enter it and enjoy its blessings. . . . God has given certain laws to the human family, which, if observed, are sufficient to prepare them to inherit this rest.”<sup>7</sup> Sister Nelson was so prepared!

### Remain faithful during trials

That glorious goal seems mighty distant if one is discouraged by worldly trouble and gloom. I remember when a friend having a difficult day exclaimed, “Oh, why was I ever born?” God’s plan answers his question. We came into this life to acquire a physical body. We may fall in love and be married. We may have children and experience the trials of mortal life. (Please forgive me for mentioning children and the trials of life in the same breath. I sense that they are both part of our growing process.) The Church was restored—the earth was created—so that those families could be sealed in holy temples. Otherwise, the whole earth would be “utterly wasted.”<sup>8</sup>

We came to be tried, to be tested, and to choose.<sup>9</sup> Our decisions determine our

destiny. We are “free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator . . . , or to choose captivity and death.”<sup>10</sup> Those who choose the Lord’s way will likely endure persecution.<sup>11</sup> But their reward is certain. Those who prove faithful “shall inherit the kingdom of God, . . . and their joy shall be full forever.”<sup>12</sup> Sister Nelson has earned that reward. What comfort that brings to me and our family!

### Maintain an eternal perspective

Trials and tests apply to rich and poor alike. Years ago I was asked to perform an operation upon a very wealthy man. A surgical biopsy confirmed that he had an advanced cancer that had spread throughout his body. As I reported this news, his immediate response was to rely upon his wealth. He would go anywhere or do anything to treat his condition. He thought he could buy his way back to health. But he soon passed away. Someone asked, “How much wealth did he leave?” The answer, of course, was, “All of it!”

His priorities were set upon things of the world. His ladder of success had been leaning against the wrong wall. I think of him when I read this scripture: “Behold, your days of probation are past; ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is . . . too late.”<sup>13</sup>

In radiant contrast, Sister Nelson prepared throughout her life for the time when she would return to God. She lived each day as though it were her last. She cherished every hour, knowing that time on earth is precious.

Some people live as if there were no day of reckoning. Others waste today’s time with a disabling fear of tomorrow or a paralyzing preoccupation over mistakes of yesterday. Each of us might well heed the words of a poet, as posted on a sundial:

The shadow by my finger cast  
Divides the future from the past:  
Before it, sleeps the unborn hour,

In darkness, and beyond thy power:  
 Behind its unreturning line,  
 The vanished hour, no longer thine:  
 One hour alone is in thy hands,—  
 The NOW on which the shadow  
 stands.<sup>14</sup>

### **How do we prepare?**

Now is the time. But *how* do we prepare? Begin with repentance! Scripture declares, “If ye have sought to do wickedly in the days of your probation, then ye are found unclean before the judgment-seat of God; . . . no unclean thing can dwell with God.”<sup>15</sup> He gave this simple rule: “Except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory.”<sup>16</sup>

### *Respect for the physical body*

Now is the time to show reverent respect for one’s physical body. It serves as the tabernacle for one’s spirit throughout all eternity. Physical appetites are to be controlled by the will of one’s spirit. We are to “deny [our]selves of all ungodliness.”<sup>17</sup> We are to “forsake all evil and cleave unto all good, [and] live by every word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.”<sup>18</sup>

### *Obedience to God’s laws*

Because of frequent and frightening calamities in the world, some people doubt the existence of God. But, in fact, He is trying to help us. He revealed these words: “How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and . . . tempests, . . . earthquakes, . . . great hailstorms, . . . famines and pestilences of every kind, . . . and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!”<sup>19</sup>

His hope for us is eternal life. We qualify for it by obedience to covenants and ordinances of the temple—for ourselves, our families, and our ancestors. We cannot be made perfect without them.<sup>20</sup> We cannot

*wish* our way into the presence of God. We are to obey the laws upon which those blessings are predicated.<sup>21</sup>

### *Align goals with God’s goals*

God’s plan is fair. Even those “who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God.”<sup>22</sup> His plan is also merciful. He “will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts.”<sup>23</sup>

Now is the time to enroll our names among the people of God. This we do by paying tithing. He tithes His people to bless them.<sup>24</sup> Sister Nelson taught that lesson to our family over and over again.<sup>25</sup>

Now is the time to align our goals with God’s goals. His work and His glory—“to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man”<sup>26</sup>—can become ours. Of temple marriage the Savior declared, “If a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, . . . [they] shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, . . . exaltation and glory in all things.”<sup>27</sup> We are to emulate the example of the Lord, to love as He did, to pray as He did, and to endure to the end as He did.<sup>28</sup>

### **Importance of death in God’s eternal plan**

Death is a necessary component of our eternal existence. No one knows when it will come, but it is essential to God’s great plan of happiness.<sup>29</sup> Thanks to the Atonement of the Lord, eventual resurrection is a reality and eternal life is a possibility for all humankind.<sup>30</sup> That possibility becomes a reality as we obey God’s law. He said, “Except ye shall keep my commandments, . . . ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>31</sup> One day we will be judged by the Lord<sup>32</sup> and go to our own mansion prepared in our Father’s heavenly house.<sup>33</sup> Celestial glory awaits those who

have been faithful to God's gentle commands.<sup>34</sup>

Brothers and sisters, we live to die and we die to live—in another realm. If we are well prepared, death brings no terror. From an eternal perspective, death is premature only for those who are not prepared to meet God.

Now is the time to prepare. Then, when death comes, we can move toward the celestial glory that Heavenly Father has prepared for His faithful children. Meanwhile, for sorrowing loved ones left behind—such as our family and me—the sting of death is soothed by a steadfast faith in Christ, a perfect brightness of hope, a love of God and of all men, and a deep desire to serve them.<sup>35</sup> That faith, that hope, that love will qualify us to come into God's holy presence and, with our eternal companions and families, dwell with Him forever. Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### NOTES

1. Alma 34:32–33; see also Alma 13:27.
2. Scripture admonishes each of us to “harden not your hearts any longer; for behold, now is the time and the day of your salvation; . . . therefore, if ye will repent . . . , immediately shall the great plan of redemption be brought about unto you” (Alma 34:31).
3. Alma 34:34; italics added.
4. Mormon 9:14; see also 2 Nephi 9:15–16; Doctrine and Covenants 88:27–32, 34–35; 130:2.
5. Doctrine and Covenants 130:18.
6. In the New Testament, the term *rest* has been translated from the Greek feminine noun *katapausis*, which means “the heavenly blessedness in which God dwells.” Thus, *rest* connotes an element of glory.
7. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 54.
8. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
9. See 2 Nephi 9:27; Doctrine and Covenants 98:12; Abraham 3:24–26.
10. 2 Nephi 2:27.
11. See 2 Timothy 3:12.
12. 2 Nephi 9:18.
13. Helaman 13:38.
14. Henry Van Dyke, “The Sun-Dial at Wells College,” in *The Poems of Henry Van Dyke* (1911), 345. Sundial and poem displayed at Wells College, Aurora, New York.
15. 1 Nephi 10:21.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 132:21; see also Doctrine and Covenants 88:36–39.
17. Moroni 10:32; see also 2 Nephi 2:21; Mormon 9:28.
18. Doctrine and Covenants 98:11.
19. Doctrine and Covenants 43:25.
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15, 18.
21. See Doctrine and Covenants 130:20–21.
22. Doctrine and Covenants 137:7.
23. Doctrine and Covenants 137:9.
24. See Malachi 3:10; 3 Nephi 24:10. Tithing also prepares people against a future day of vengeance and burning (see Doctrine and Covenants 85:3).
25. See Spencer J. Condie, *Russell M. Nelson: Father, Surgeon, Apostle* (2003), 104.
26. Moses 1:39; see also Moses 6:59; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:62.
27. Doctrine and Covenants 132:19; see also Doctrine and Covenants 75:5; 101:65.
28. See 2 Nephi 33:4; 3 Nephi 15:9; 27:21–22; Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
29. See Alma 42:8–9.
30. See 1 Corinthians 15:50–54; 1 John 5:11, 20; Alma 12:25; Mormon 9:13; Doctrine and Covenants 46:14; 76:40–42, 50–59; 133:62.
31. 3 Nephi 12:20.
32. See 1 Nephi 10:20; 2 Nephi 9:41–46; Alma 12:27.
33. See John 14:2; Doctrine and Covenants 98:18.
34. See Doctrine and Covenants 78:7; 131:1–3.
35. See 2 Nephi 31:20; Mosiah 16:7–8; Moroni 7:38–48.

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The choir sang “Teach Me to Walk in the Light.”

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## President Faust

We are grateful to the Tabernacle Choir for the beautiful music they have provided this morning. President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, will be our concluding speaker at this session.

Following President Monson's remarks, the choir will sing "How Firm a Foundation." After the singing, the benediction will be offered by Elder Robert K. Dellenbach of the Seventy, and the conference will be adjourned until 2:00 this afternoon.

## President Thomas S. Monson

### Constant truths for changing times

My dear brothers and sisters, both within my view and assembled throughout the world, I seek an interest in your prayers and your faith as I respond to the assignment and privilege to speak to you.

I begin by expressing commendation to all of you. In this challenging world, the youth of the Church are the very best ever. The faith, the service, and the actions of our members are praiseworthy. We are a prayerful and faith-filled people, ever striving to be decent and honest. We take care of each other. We try to show love to our neighbors.

However, lest we become complacent, may I quote from 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon:

"At that day shall [the devil] . . . lull them away into carnal security, that they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well—and thus the devil cheateth their souls."<sup>1</sup>

Someone has said that our complacency tree has many branches, and each spring more buds come into bloom.

We cannot afford to be complacent. We live in perilous times; the signs are all around us. We are acutely aware of the negative influences in our society that stalk traditional families. At times television and movies portray worldly and immoral heroes and heroines and attempt to hold up as role models some actors and actresses whose lives are anything but exemplary.

Why should we follow a blind guide? Radios blare forth much denigrating music with blatant lyrics, dangerous invitations, and descriptions of almost every type of evil imaginable.

We, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, must stand up to the dangers which surround us and our families. To aid us in this determination, I offer several suggestions, as well as some examples from my own life.

### Hold regular family home evenings

I begin with family home evening. We cannot afford to neglect this heaven-inspired program. It can bring spiritual growth to each member of the family, helping him or her to withstand the temptations which are everywhere. The lessons learned in the home are those that last the longest. As President Gordon B. Hinckley and his predecessors have stated, "The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Glenn J. Doman, noted author and medical authority, wrote:

"The newborn child is almost an exact duplicate of an empty . . . computer, although superior to such a computer in almost every way. . . . What is placed in the child's [mind] during the first eight years of life is probably there to stay." "If you put misinformation into his [mind] during [this period], it is extremely difficult to erase it."