

Elder L. Tom Perry

My brothers and sisters, across the world this morning we have come to listen to a prophet's voice. I testify that the voice we have just heard is the voice of God's living prophet on the earth today, President Thomas S. Monson. How blessed we are to have his teachings and example!

Study of the New Testament

This year all of us have the opportunity to study the words of the prophets in the New Testament in Sunday School. While the Old Testament is a study of prophets and a people, the New Testament is focused on the life and influence of the only Man who came into mortality with dual citizenship in heaven and on earth—our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

The world today is so saturated with doctrines of men that it is easy to forget and lose faith in that all-important account of the Savior's life and ministry—the New Testament. This sacred volume is the centerpiece of scriptural history, just as the Savior Himself should be the centerpiece of our lives. We must commit ourselves to study it and treasure it!

Sabbath day observance

There are priceless pearls of wisdom to be found in our study of the New Testament. I always enjoy reading the accounts of Paul as he traveled and organized the Savior's Church, especially his teachings to Timothy. In the fourth chapter of Paul's writings to Timothy, we read: "These things command and teach. . . . Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity."¹ I can think of no better way for us to begin or continue to be an example of the believers than in our observance of the Sabbath day.

Beginning with the Creation of the world, one day was set apart from all others. "And God blessed the seventh day,

and sanctified it."² Even God rested from His labors on this day, and He expects His children to do the same. To the children of Israel, He delivered the commandment:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. . . .

". . . Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."³

The Sabbath and the sacrament

The pattern of Sabbath day observance must always include worship. After Adam and Eve entered mortality, they were commanded to "worship the Lord their God, and . . . offer the firstlings of their flocks [as] an offering unto the Lord . . . [in] similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father."⁴ The sacrifice of animals reminded Adam's posterity that one day the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, would make a sacrifice of His own life for us.

Throughout His life the Savior spoke of that sacrifice.⁵ On the eve of His Crucifixion, His words began to be fulfilled. He gathered His disciples together in the upper room, away from the distractions of the world. He instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."⁶

From that time forward, the Savior's Atonement became the great and last sacrifice. When He appeared on the American

continent after His Resurrection, He conferred His priesthood upon His disciples and introduced the sacrament by saying:

“And this shall ye always observe to do, . . . even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.

“ . . . And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.”⁷

It is remarkable that even through the dark periods of apostasy, this pattern of Sabbath day worship and the sacrament continued to be practiced in many forms.

When the gospel was restored, Peter, James, and John, three of the Apostles who first received the sacrament from the Savior, appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. Under their direction, the priesthood authority necessary to administer the sacrament to the members of the Church was restored.⁸

Conferred by the Savior to His prophets and apostles and from them to us, that priesthood authority continues on the earth today. Young priesthood holders across the world qualify themselves to exercise priesthood power by earnestly keeping the commandments and living gospel standards. As these young men keep spiritually clean hands and pure hearts, they prepare and bless the sacrament in the Savior’s way—a way defined by what He did 2,000 years ago.

Three things the Lord requires

Partaking of the sacrament is the center of our Sabbath day observance. In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord commands all of us:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High. . . .

“And on this day thou shalt do none other thing.”⁹

As we consider the pattern of the Sabbath and the sacrament in our own lives, there appear to be three things the Lord requires of us: first, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; second, to go to the house of prayer and offer up our sacraments; and third, to rest from our labors.

Keep ourselves unspotted from the world

It is a glorious thing to be a Christian and to live as a true disciple of Christ. Of us He said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”¹⁰ To keep ourselves unspotted from the world, He expects us to avoid such worldly distractions of businesses and recreational facilities on the Sabbath day.

I believe He also desires us to dress appropriately. Our youth may think the old saying “Sunday best” is outdated. Still, we know that when Sunday dress deteriorates to everyday attire, attitudes and actions follow. Of course, it may not be necessary for our children to wear formal Sunday attire until the sun goes down. However, by the clothing we encourage them to wear and the activities we plan, we help them prepare for the sacrament and enjoy its blessings throughout the day.

Offer up our sacraments

What does it mean to offer up our sacraments to the Lord? We acknowledge that all of us make mistakes. Each of us has a need to confess and forsake our sins and errors to our Heavenly Father and to others we may have offended. The Sabbath provides us with a precious opportunity to offer up these—our sacraments—to the Lord. He said, “Remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.”¹¹

Elder Melvin J. Ballard has suggested, “We want every Latter-day Saint to come to the sacrament table because it is the place for self-investigation, for self-inspection,

where we may learn to rectify our course and to make right our own lives, bringing ourselves into harmony with the teachings of the Church and with our brethren and sisters.”¹²

As we worthily partake of the sacrament, we witness that we are willing to take the Savior’s name upon us and keep His commandments and *do* always remember Him, that we may have His Spirit to be with us. In this way the covenant of our baptism is renewed. The Lord assured His disciples, “As oft as ye do this ye will remember this hour that I was with you.”¹³

Rest from our labors

Sometimes we think of resting from our labors as merely letting the hay baler stand idle in the field or putting a Closed sign on the business door. Yet in today’s world, labor includes the everyday work of our lives. This could mean business activities we may accomplish from home, athletic competitions, and other pursuits that take us away from Sabbath day worship and the opportunity to minister to others.

Honoring the Sabbath

“Trifle not with sacred things,”¹⁴ the Lord revealed to the Latter-day Saints, as if to remind us of what He told His disciples: “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.”¹⁵

Brothers and sisters, in the latter days the adversary succeeds when we relax our commitment to the Savior, ignore His teachings in the New Testament and other scripture, and cease to follow Him. Parents, now is the time to teach our children to be examples of the believers by attending sacrament meeting. When Sunday morning arrives, help them to be well rested, properly dressed, and spiritually prepared to partake of the emblems of the sacrament and receive the enlightening, edifying, ennobling power of the Holy Ghost. Let your family be filled with love as you honor the Sabbath all day long and experience its

spiritual blessings throughout the week. Invite your sons and daughters to “arise and shine forth” by keeping the Sabbath day holy, that “[their] light may be a standard for the nations.”¹⁶

As the years go by, I continue to reflect on the Sabbath days of my youth and young adulthood. I still remember the first day I passed the sacrament as a deacon and the little glass cups I passed to the members of our ward. A few years ago a Church building in my hometown was re-modeled. A compartment in the pulpit had been sealed. When it was opened, there were some of these little glass cups that had remained hidden for years. One of them was presented to me as a memento.

I also remember the green footlocker we carried with us in the U.S. Marine Corps. Inside the footlocker was a wooden tray and package of sacrament cups so that we could be blessed by the peace and hope of the Lord’s Supper even in the conflict and despair of war.

As I think about those sacrament cups from my youth, one in the sheltered valley of my boyhood home and the other thousands of miles away in the Pacific, I am filled with gratitude that the Savior of the world was willing to drink from the “bitter cup”¹⁷ for my sake. And because He did, I can say with the Psalmist, “My cup runneth over”¹⁸ with the blessings of His infinite and eternal Atonement.

On this day before the Sabbath, as we begin this great conference, let us remember the blessings and opportunities that are ours as we attend sacrament meeting each week in our wards and branches. Let us prepare and conduct ourselves on the Sabbath in a manner that will call down the blessings promised us upon ourselves and our families. I bear my special witness that the greatest joy we receive in this life is in following the Savior. May we keep His commandments by keeping His sacred day holy is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. 1 Timothy 4:11–12.
2. Genesis 2:3.
3. Exodus 20:8–11.
4. Moses 5:5, 7.
5. See, for example, Mark 10:32–34; John 2:19; 10:17; 12:32.
6. Matthew 26:26–28.
7. 3 Nephi 18:6–7.
8. See Joseph Smith—History 1:68–69, 72; see also Doctrine and Covenants 27:12–13.
9. Doctrine and Covenants 59:9–10, 13.
10. John 17:16.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 59:12.
12. In Bryant S. Hinckley, *Sermons and Missionary Services of Melvin Joseph Ballard* (1949), 150.
13. Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:21, in Bible appendix.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 6:12.
15. Mark 2:27.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 115:5.
17. 3 Nephi 11:11.
18. Psalm 23:5.

Jean A. Stevens

Looking to children as examples

Our Father in Heaven, in His great wisdom and love, sends His spirit sons and daughters to this earth as children. They come to families as precious gifts with a divine nature and destiny. Our Heavenly Father knows children are a key to helping us become like Him. There is so much we can learn from children.

This important truth was evidenced some years ago as a member of the Seventy was on assignment in Hong Kong. He visited a very humble ward that was struggling in many ways, unable to provide for its own needs. As the bishop described their situation, the General Authority felt the impression to have the members pay their tithing. The bishop, knowing their dire circumstances, was concerned about how he could carry out that counsel. He thought about it and decided he would approach some of the most faith-filled members of his ward and ask them to pay their tithing. The next Sunday he went to the Primary. He taught the children about the Lord's law of tithing and asked if they would be willing to pay tithing on the money they earned. The children said they would. And they did.

The bishop later went to the adults in the ward and shared with them that for the past six months their faithful children had been paying tithing. He asked them if they would be willing to follow the example of these children and do the same. The people were so touched by the sacrifices the children were willing to make that they did what was necessary to pay their tithing. And the windows of heaven were opened. With the example of these faithful children, a ward grew in obedience and in testimony.

It was Jesus Christ Himself who taught us to look to children as an example. The New Testament records His answer when His Apostles disputed who should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus answered their question with a small yet powerful object lesson. He called a little child to Him and set him in the midst of them and said:

“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3–4).