

The Key to Spiritual Protection

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Peace can be settled in the heart of each who turns to the scriptures and unlocks the promises of protection and redemption.

A short time ago, I sealed a young couple in the temple. This couple had kept themselves worthy to arrive at the marvelous day when a son and a daughter leave the homes of their youth and become husband and wife. On this sacred occasion, they were pure and clean. In due course, they will begin to raise children of their own, consistent with the pattern established by our Father in Heaven. Their happiness, and the happiness of future generations, depends upon living those standards established by the Savior and set forth in His scriptures.

Parents today wonder if there is a safe place to raise children. There *is* a safe place. It is in a gospel-centered home. We focus on the family in the Church, and we counsel parents everywhere to raise their children in righteousness.

The Apostle Paul prophesied and warned that “in the last days perilous times shall come.

“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

“Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

“Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”¹

Paul also prophesied, “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.”²

These verses serve as a warning, showing which patterns to avoid. We must be ever watchful and diligent. We can review each of these prophecies and put a checkmark by them as being present and of concern in the world today:

Perilous times—present. We live in very precarious times.

Covetous, boasters, proud—all are present and among us.

Blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection—all of these are well accounted for.

Trucebreakers, false accusers, and so on—all can be checked off against the prevailing evidence that exists

all around us.

Moroni also spoke of the wickedness of our day when he warned:

“When ye shall see these things come among you ... ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation. ...

“Wherefore, I, Moroni, am commanded to write these things that evil may be done away, and that the time may come that Satan may have no power upon the hearts of the children of men, but that they may be persuaded to do good continually, that they may come unto the fountain of all righteousness and be saved.”³

The descriptions Paul and Moroni give of our day are so accurate that they cannot be dismissed. For many it may be quite disturbing, even discouraging. Nevertheless, when I think of the future, I am overwhelmed with feelings of positive optimism.

In Paul’s revelation, in addition to the list of challenges and problems, he also tells us what we can do to protect ourselves:

“Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”⁴

The scriptures hold the keys to spiritual protection. They contain the doctrine and laws and ordinances that will bring each child of God to a testimony of Jesus Christ as the Savior and Redeemer.

With years of preparation, there has been an enormous effort to produce the scriptures in every language, with footnotes and cross-references. We seek to make them available to all who wish to learn. They teach us where to go and what to do. They offer hope and knowledge.

Years ago, Elder S. Dilworth Young of the Seventy taught me a lesson about reading the scriptures. A stake was struggling with tensions and difficulties among the members, and counsel needed to be given.

I asked President Young, “What should I say?”

He answered simply, “Tell them to read the scriptures.”

I asked, “Which scriptures?”

He said, “It really doesn’t matter. Tell them to open up the Book of Mormon, for instance, and begin to read. Soon the feeling of peace and inspiration will come, and a solution will present itself.”

Make scripture reading a part of your regular routine, and the blessings will follow. There is in the scriptures a voice of warning, but there is also great nourishment.

If the language of the scriptures at first seems strange to you, keep reading. Soon you will come to recognize the beauty and power found on those pages.

Paul said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

for instruction in righteousness.”⁵

You can test this promise for yourself.

We live in perilous times; nevertheless, we can find hope and peace for ourselves and for our families. Those living in sorrow, despairing at the possibility of children being rescued from where the world has taken them, must never give up. “Be not afraid, only believe.”⁶ Righteousness is more powerful than wickedness.

Children taught an understanding of the scriptures early in life will come to know the path they should walk and will be more inclined to remain on that path. Those who stray will have the ability to return and, with help, can find their way back.

The sons of Mosiah fought against the Church for a time but later repented and underwent a dramatic change. In Alma we read, “These sons of Mosiah ... had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.”⁷

President Joseph F. Smith was five years old when his father, Hyrum, was killed in Carthage Jail. Later, Joseph crossed the plains with his widowed mother.

At age 15 he was called on a mission to Hawaii. He felt lost and alone and said: “I was very much oppressed. ... I felt as if I was so debased in my condition of poverty, lack of intelligence and knowledge, just a boy, that I hardly dared look [anyone] in the face.”

While pondering his plight one night, young Joseph dreamed he was on a journey, rushing as fast as he possibly could. He carried with him a small bundle. Finally, he came to a wonderful mansion, which was his destination. As he approached, he saw a sign which read, “Bath.” He quickly went in and washed himself. He opened his little bundle and found clean, white clothing—“a thing,” he said, “I had not seen for a long time.” He put them on and rushed to the door of the mansion.

“I knocked,” he said, “and the door opened, and the man who stood there was the Prophet Joseph Smith. He looked at me a little reprovably, and the first words he said [were]: ‘Joseph, you are late.’ Yet I took confidence and said:

“‘Yes, but I am clean—I am clean!’”⁸

And so it can be for each of us.

If you are set on a course of faith and activity in the Church, stay on course and keep your covenants. Continue forward until the time when the Lord’s blessings will come to you and the Holy Ghost will be revealed as a moving force in your life.

If you are presently on a course that points away from the one outlined in the scriptures, let me assure you there is a way back.

Jesus Christ has prescribed a very clear method for us to repent and find healing in our lives. The cure for most mistakes can be found by seeking forgiveness through personal prayer. However, there are certain spiritual illnesses, particularly those dealing with violations of the moral law, which absolutely require the assistance and treatment of a qualified spiritual physician.

Years ago there came to my office a young woman and her aging father. She had brought him several hundred miles to find a remedy for the guilt he felt. As a young man he had made a serious mistake, and in his old age the memory came back to him. He could not shake the feeling of guilt. He could not go back and undo the problem of his youth on his own, but he could start where he was and, with help, erase the guilt which had followed him all those years.

I was grateful that by teaching him principles from the Book of Mormon, it was as though a tremendous weight was lifted from his shoulders. When he and his daughter drove back home those many miles, the old man had left behind the guilt of the past transgression.

If you “awake to a sense of your awful situation”⁹ and wish to return to full spiritual health, see your bishop. He holds the keys and can help you along the pathway of repentance.

Repentance is individual, and so is forgiveness. The Lord requires only that one turn from their sin, and “[He] will forgive their iniquity, and ... remember their sin no more.”¹⁰

As the repentance process is completed, you will come to understand the meaning of Isaiah’s promise about the Atonement: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”¹¹

Just as chalk can be removed from a blackboard, with sincere repentance the effects of our transgression can be erased through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. That promise applies in every case.

The gospel teaches us to be happy, to have faith rather than fear, to find hope and overcome despair, to leave darkness and turn toward the light of the everlasting gospel.

Paul and others warned about the trials of our time and the days yet to come. But peace can be settled in the heart of each who turns to the scriptures and unlocks the promises of protection and redemption that are taught therein. We invite all to turn to the Savior Jesus Christ, to His teachings as found in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

I bear certain witness of the scriptures as a key to our spiritual protection. I also bear witness of the healing power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, “that through him all might be saved”¹² who will be saved. The Lord’s Church has been established on the earth once again. Of the truthfulness of the gospel I bear witness. Of Him I am a witness. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. 2 Timothy 3:1–5.

2. 2 Timothy 3:13.

3. Ether 8:24, 26.

4. 2 Timothy 3:14–15.

5. 2 Timothy 3:16.

6. Mark 5:36.

7. Alma 17:2.

8. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 542.

9. Ether 8:24.

10. Jeremiah 31:34.

11. Isaiah 1:18.

12. Doctrine and Covenants 76:42.