

Valiant Discipleship in the Latter Days

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Let us be confident, not apologetic, valiant, not timid, faithful, not fearful as we hold up the Lord's light in these last days.

Moral agency is God's precious gift to each of His children.¹ We are "free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil."² God *won't* force us to do good, and the devil *can't* force us to do evil.³ Though some may think that mortality is a contest between God and the adversary, a word from the Savior "and Satan is silenced and banished. ... It is [our] strength that is being tested—not God's."⁴

In the end we will therefore reap what our lifelong choices have sown.⁵ So what does the sum total of our thoughts, desires, words, and works say about our love for the Savior, His chosen servants, and His restored Church? Do our baptismal, priesthood, and temple covenants mean more to us than the praise of the world or the number of "likes" on social media? Is our love for the Lord and His commandments stronger than our love for anything or anyone else in this life?

The adversary and his followers have always sought to destroy the works of Christ and His prophets. The Savior's commandments, if not ignored altogether, have been rationalized into meaninglessness by many in today's world. Messengers of God who teach "inconvenient" truths are often dismissed. Even the Savior Himself was called "a man gluttonous, and a winebibber,"⁶ accused of disturbing public sentiment and being divisive. Weak and conniving souls "took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk,"⁷ and His "sect" of early Christians was "every where ... spoken against."⁸

The Savior and His early followers dealt with serious internal and external opposition, and we experience the same. Today it is almost impossible to courageously live our faith without occasionally attracting a few actual and virtual fingers of scorn from the worldly. Confidently following the Savior is rewarding, but at times we may get caught in the crosshairs of those advocating an "eat, drink, and be merry"⁹ philosophy, where faith in Christ, obedience, and repentance are substituted by the illusion that God will justify a little sin because He loves us so much.

Speaking “by [His] own voice or by the voice of [His] servants,”¹⁰ did the Savior not say about our day that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers” and that many “shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”?¹¹ Did He not lament that “in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”?¹² Did He not warn that “of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”?¹³ Did He not foresee that “evil [would be called] good, and good evil”¹⁴ and that “a man’s foes shall be they of his own household”?¹⁵

So what about us? Should we be intimidated or afraid? Should we live our religion at periscope depth? Surely not! With faith in Christ, we need not fear the reproach of men or be afraid of their revilings.¹⁶ With the Savior at the helm and living prophets to lead and guide us, “who can be against us?”¹⁷ Let us be confident, not apologetic, valiant, not timid, faithful, not fearful as we hold up the Lord’s light in these last days.¹⁸

The Savior made clear that “whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father. ... But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father.”¹⁹

Consequently, while some would prefer a God who comes without commandments, let us boldly testify, in the words of Elder D. Todd Christofferson, that “a God who makes no demands is the functional equivalent of a God who does not exist.”²⁰

While some would prefer to be selective in the commandments they follow, let us joyfully accept the Savior’s invitation to “live by *every* word which proceedeth forth out of the mouth of God.”²¹

While many believe the Lord and His Church condone doing “whatsoever [our] heart desireth,”²² let us valiantly proclaim that it is wrong to “follow a multitude to do evil,”²³ because “crowds cannot make right what God has declared to be wrong.”²⁴

“O remember, remember ... how strict [yet liberating] are the commandments of God.”²⁵ Teaching them clearly may at times be seen as an act of intolerance. Let us therefore respectfully demonstrate that it is not only possible but essential to love a child of God who embraces beliefs different from our own.

We can accept and respect others without endorsing their beliefs or actions that do not align with the Lord’s will. There is no need to sacrifice truth on the altar of agreeableness and social desirability.

Zion and Babylon are incompatible. “No man can serve two masters.”²⁶ Let’s all remember the Savior’s penetrating question, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do *not* the things which I say?”²⁷

Let us demonstrate our love for the Lord through wholehearted, voluntary obedience.

If you feel caught between your discipleship and the world, please remember that your loving Savior “sendeth an invitation ... , for the arms of mercy are extended [to you], and he saith: Repent, and I will receive you.”²⁸

President Russell M. Nelson taught that Jesus Christ “will perform some of His mightiest works between now and when He comes again.”²⁹ But he also taught that “those who choose the Lord’s way will likely endure persecution.”³⁰ Being “counted worthy to suffer shame for his name”³¹ may at times be our lot as we “allow His voice to take priority over any other.”³²

“Blessed is he,” the Savior said, “whosoever shall *not* be offended in me.”³³ Elsewhere we learn that “great peace have they which *love* thy law: and *nothing* shall offend them.”³⁴ Nothing! So let’s ask ourselves, “Am I enduring for a while, but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by am I offended?³⁵ Am I firmly built on the rock of Jesus Christ and His servants?”

Moral relativists advocate that truth is merely a social construct, that there are no moral absolutes. What they are really saying is that there is no sin,³⁶ that “whatsoever a man [does is] no crime,”³⁷ a philosophy for which the adversary is claiming proud authorship! Let us therefore beware of wolves in sheep’s clothing, who are always recruiting and “[often use] their intellectual reservations to cover their [own] behavioral lapses.”³⁸

If we really want to be valiant disciples of Christ, we will find a way. Otherwise, the adversary offers enticing alternatives. But as faithful disciples, “we need not apologize for our beliefs nor back down from that which we know to be true.”³⁹

In conclusion, a word about the 15 servants of God seated behind me. While the worldly “say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not,”⁴⁰ the faithful are “crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time.”⁴¹

Not surprisingly, these men frequently become the lightning rods for those unhappy with the word of God as the prophets proclaim it. Those who reject the prophets don’t realize that “no prophecy of the scripture is [to be] of any private interpretation” or the result of the will of man “but [that] holy men of God [speak now] as they [are] moved by the Holy Ghost.”⁴²

Like Paul, these men of God are “not ... ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” and are His “prisoner[s]”⁴³ in the sense that the doctrine they teach is not theirs but His who called them. Like Peter, they “cannot but speak the things which [they] have seen and heard.”⁴⁴ I testify that the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve are good and honest men who love God and His children and who are loved by Him. Their words we should receive as if from the Lord’s own mouth “in all patience and faith. For by doing these things the gates of hell shall not prevail against [us]; ... and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before [us].”⁴⁵

“No unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing”;⁴⁶ it will march on triumphantly with or without you or me, so “choose you this day whom ye will serve.”⁴⁷ Don’t be fooled or intimidated by the loud adversarial noises emanating from the great and spacious building. Their desperate decibels are no match for the serene influence of the still, small voice upon broken hearts and contrite spirits.

I testify that Christ lives, that He is our Savior and Redeemer, and that He leads His Church through the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, thus assuring that we are not “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”⁴⁸

“True disciples of Jesus Christ,” President Nelson taught, “are willing to stand out, speak up, and be different from the people of the world. They are undaunted, devoted, and courageous.”⁴⁹

Brothers and sisters, it’s a good day to be good! In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 101:78.
2. 2 Nephi 2:27.
3. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 214.
4. Hugh Nibley, “Beyond Politics,” *BYU Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1974), 8.
5. See 2 Corinthians 9:6; Doctrine and Covenants 6:33.
6. Matthew 11:19.
7. Matthew 22:15.
8. Acts 28:22.
9. 2 Nephi 28:7.
10. Doctrine and Covenants 1:38.
11. 2 Timothy 4:3–4.
12. Matthew 15:9.
13. Acts 20:30.
14. Isaiah 5:20.
15. Matthew 10:36.
16. See 2 Nephi 8:7.
17. Romans 8:31.
18. See 3 Nephi 18:24.
19. Matthew 10:32–33.

20. D. Todd Christofferson, “Free Forever, to Act for Themselves,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2014, 18.
21. Doctrine and Covenants 98:11; emphasis added.
22. Helaman 13:27.
23. Exodus 23:2.
24. Neal A. Maxwell, “Answer Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 33.
25. Alma 37:13.
26. Matthew 6:24.
27. Luke 6:46; emphasis added.
28. Alma 5:33.
29. Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2018, 96.
30. Russell M. Nelson, “Now Is the Time to Prepare,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 17.
31. Acts 5:41.
32. Russell M. Nelson, “Let God Prevail,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 94.
33. Matthew 11:6; emphasis added.
34. Psalm 119:165; emphasis added.
35. See Matthew 13:20–21.
36. See 2 Nephi 2:13.
37. Alma 30:17; see also Alma 1:4.
38. Neal A. Maxwell, “Remember How Merciful the Lord Hath Been,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 45; see also Neal A. Maxwell, *All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience* (1979), 110.
39. M. Russell Ballard, “How Is It with Us?,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 33; *Liahona*, July 2000, 40.
40. Isaiah 30:10.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 59:4.
42. 2 Peter 1:20–21.
43. 2 Timothy 1:8.
44. Acts 4:20.

45. Doctrine and Covenants 21:5–6.
46. *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 444.
47. Joshua 24:15.
48. Ephesians 4:14.
49. Russell M. Nelson, “Drawing the Power of Jesus Christ into Our Lives,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 40–41.