

# Legacy of Encouragement

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I encourage you to continue striving to qualify to return to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters, I am grateful to be gathered with you in this general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We have felt your faith and your love wherever you are. We have been edified by the inspired teaching, the powerful testimonies, and the magnificent music.

I encourage you to continue striving to qualify to return to Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Wherever you are on the covenant path, you will find a struggle against the physical trials of mortality and the opposition of Satan.

As my mother told me when I complained of how hard something was, “Oh, Hal, of course it’s hard. It’s supposed to be. Life is a test.”

She could say that calmly, even with a smile, because she knew two things. Regardless of the struggle, what would matter most would be to arrive at home to be with her Heavenly Father. And she knew she could do it through faith in her Savior.

She felt that He was close to her. In the days she knew she was about to die, she talked with me about the Savior as she lay in her bedroom. There was a door to another room near her bed. She smiled and looked at the door when she spoke calmly of seeing Him soon. I still remember looking at the door and imagining the room behind it.

She is now in the spirit world. She was able to keep her eyes on the prize she wanted despite years of physical and personal trial.

The legacy of encouragement she left for us is best described in Moroni 7, where Mormon encourages his son Moroni and his people. It is a legacy of encouragement to a posterity as was my mother’s to her family. Mormon passed that legacy of encouragement to all who have a determination to qualify, through all their mortal tests, for eternal life.

Mormon begins in the first verses of Moroni 7 with a testimony of Jesus Christ, of angels, and of the Spirit of Christ, which allows us to know

good from evil and so be able to choose the right.

He puts Jesus Christ first, as do all who succeed in giving encouragement to those struggling upward on the path to their heavenly home:

“For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made.

“But behold, my beloved brethren, I judge better things of you, for I judge that ye have faith in Christ because of your meekness; for if ye have not faith in him then ye are not fit to be numbered among the people of his church.”<sup>1</sup>

Mormon saw meekness as evidence of the strength of their faith. He saw that they felt dependent on the Savior. He encouraged them by noting *that* faith. Mormon continued giving them encouragement by helping them see that their faith and meekness would build their assurance and their confidence of success in their struggle:

“And again, my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?

“And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, to be raised unto life eternal, and this because of your faith in him according to the promise.

“Wherefore, if a man have faith he must needs have hope; for without faith there cannot be any hope.

“And again, behold I say unto you that he cannot have faith and hope, save he shall be meek, and lowly of heart.”<sup>2</sup>

Mormon then encourages them by testifying that they are on the way to receiving the gift of their hearts being filled with the pure love of Christ. He weaves together for them the interactions of faith in Jesus Christ, meekness, humility, the Holy Ghost, and the firm hope of receiving eternal life. He encourages them this way:

“For none is acceptable before God, save the meek and lowly in heart; and if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.”<sup>3</sup>

Looking back, I now see how that gift of charity—the pure love of Christ—strengthened, guided, sustained, and changed my mother in the

struggle on her way home.

“And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail—

“But charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with him.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; that we may have this hope; that we may be purified even as he is pure.”<sup>4</sup>

I am grateful for the encouragement of Mormon’s example and teaching. I have been blessed as well by my mother’s legacy. Prophets from Adam to the present day, through teaching and by example, have strengthened me.

Out of deference to those I know personally and their families, I have chosen not to seek to verify the details of their struggles or to speak of their great gifts publicly. Yet what I have seen has encouraged me and changed me for the better.

At the risk of invading her privacy, I will add a brief report of the encouragement of my wife. I do so carefully. She is a private person who neither seeks nor appreciates praise.

We have been married for 60 years. It is because of that experience that I now understand the meaning of these scriptural words: faith, hope, meekness, enduring, seeking not our own, rejoicing in the truth, not thinking evil, and above all, charity.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of that experience, I can bear testimony that apparently ordinary human beings can take all of those wonderful ideals into their daily lives as they rise through the buffetings of life.

Millions of you listening know such people. Many of you *are* such people. All of us need such encouraging examples and loving friends.

When you sit with someone as their ministering sister or brother, you represent the Lord. Think of what He would do or say. He would invite them to come unto Him. He would encourage them. He would notice

and praise the beginning of the changes they will need to make. And He would be the perfect example for them to emulate.

No one can completely do that yet, but by listening to this conference, you can know you are on the way. The Savior knows your struggles in detail. He knows your great potential to grow in faith, hope, and charity.

The commandments and covenants He offers you are not tests to control you. They are a gift to lift you toward receiving all the gifts of God and returning home to your Heavenly Father and the Lord, who love you.

Jesus Christ paid the price of our sins. We may claim that blessing of eternal life if we will have faith in Him enough to repent and become like a child, pure and ready to receive the greatest of all the gifts of God.

I pray that you will accept His invitation and that you will offer it to others of our Heavenly Father's children.

I pray for our missionaries across the world. May they be inspired to encourage each person to want and to believe that the invitation is from Jesus Christ through His servants who have taken His name upon them.

I testify that He lives and leads His Church. I am His witness. President Russell M. Nelson is the living prophet of God for all the earth. I know that is true. In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

#### Notes

1. Moroni 7:38–39.
2. Moroni 7:40–43.
3. Moroni 7:44.
4. Moroni 7:45–48.
5. See 1 Corinthians 13; Moroni 7.