

Be Valiant in the Fight of Faith

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From the pen of Paul, we take this challenge:

“O man of God, ... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” (1 Tim. 6:11–12.)

So wrote our fellow apostle to those who had accepted the Son of God as their Savior, who had taken upon themselves the yoke of Christ, who had covenanted in the waters of baptism to serve him and keep his commandments. And so say we to all those today who have in like manner taken upon themselves the name of Christ and enlisted in the cause of truth and righteousness: Be valiant. Fight a good fight. Stand true. Keep the commandments. Overcome the world.

Speaking of himself and the great warfare with the world which he had won, Paul said:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:7–8.)

As members of the Church, we are engaged in a mighty conflict. We are at war. We have enlisted in the cause of Christ to fight against Lucifer and all that is lustful and carnal and evil in the world. We have sworn to fight alongside our friends and against our enemies, and we must not be confused in distinguishing friends from foes. As another of our ancient fellow apostles wrote: “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” (James 4:4.)

The great war that rages on every side and which unfortunately is resulting in many casualties, some fatal, is no new thing. There was war even in heaven, when the forces of evil sought to destroy the agency of man, and when Lucifer sought to lead us away from the path of progression and advancement established by an all-wise Father.

That war is continuing on earth, and the devil is still wroth with the Church and goes forth “to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Rev. 12:17.)

And it is now as it has always been. The Saints can only overcome him and his forces “by the blood of the Lamb, ... by the word of their testimony,” and if they love “not their lives unto

the death.” (Rev. 12:11.)

Now there neither are nor can be any neutrals in this war. Every member of the Church is on one side or the other. The soldiers who fight in its battles will either, with Paul, come off victorious and win “a crown of righteousness,” or they shall, in Paul’s language, “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” in that day when he comes to take “vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thes. 1:9, 8.)

In this war all who do not stand forth courageously and valiantly are by that fact alone aiding the cause of the enemy. “They who are not for me are against me, saith our God.” (2 Ne. 10:16.)

We are either for the Church or we are against it. We either take its part or we take the consequences. We cannot survive spiritually with one foot in the Church and the other in the world. We must make the choice. It is either the Church or the world. There is no middle ground. And the Lord loves a courageous man who fights openly and boldly in his army.

To certain members of his ancient church, he said:

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” (Rev. 3:15–16.) The summer patriot and the sunshine saint retreat when the battle wages fiercely around them. Theirs is not the conqueror’s crown. They are overcome by the world.

Members of the Church who have testimonies and who live clean and upright lives, but who are not courageous and valiant, do not gain the celestial kingdom. Theirs is a terrestrial inheritance. Of them the revelation says, “These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God.” (D&C 76:79.)

As Jesus said, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62.)

What is the testimony of Jesus? And what must we do to be valiant therein?

“Be not ... ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,” Paul wrote to Timothy, “... but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel.” (2 Tim. 1:8.) And to the Beloved John came this divine message: “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev. 19:10.)

The testimony of our Lord! The testimony of Jesus! What a glorious and wondrous concept! It opens the door to glory and honor with the Father and the Son forever! The testimony of Jesus is to believe in Christ, to receive his gospel, and to live his law.

Jesus is the Lord. He is God’s own Son who came into the world to ransom us men from the temporal and spiritual death brought upon us by the fall of Adam. Jesus has bought us with his blood. He is the resurrection and the life. He “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Tim. 1:10.) He is our Savior, our Redeemer, our Advocate with the Father. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men,

the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim. 2:5.)

Salvation is in Christ. His is the only name given under heaven whereby this priceless gift may be won. Without him there would be no resurrection and all men would be forever lost. Without him there would be no eternal life, no return to the presence of a gracious Father, no celestial thrones for the saints.

No tongue can tell, no mind can envision, no heart can conceive of all that comes to us because of him. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” (Rev. 5:12.)

Now there can be no perfect testimony of the divine Sonship of Christ and his saving goodness unless and until we receive the fulness of his everlasting gospel. A testimony of the gospel comes by revelation from the Holy Ghost. When the Holy Spirit speaks to the spirit within us, we then know with an absolute conviction of the verity of the revealed message.

A testimony is to know by revelation that Jesus is the Christ; that Joseph Smith and his successors are the revealers of the knowledge of Christ and of salvation for our day; and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the kingdom of God on earth, the one place where salvation may be found.

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. It is a gift of the Spirit. It comes in full measure only to faithful members of the Church. It is reserved for those whose right it is to have the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost. It is the spiritual endowment which sets a man apart as a prophet in fulfillment of the prayer of Moses: “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!” (Num. 11:29.)

Now what does it mean to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus?

It is to be courageous and bold; to use all our strength, energy, and ability in the warfare with the world; to fight the good fight of faith. “Be strong and of a good courage,” the Lord commanded Joshua, and then specified that this strength and courage consisted of meditating upon and observing to do all that is written in the law of the Lord. (See Josh. 1:6–9.) The great cornerstone of valiance in the cause of righteousness is obedience to the whole law of the whole gospel.

To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him”; it is to deny ourselves “of all ungodliness,” and “love God” with all our “might, mind and strength.” (Moro. 10:32.)

To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to believe in Christ and his gospel with unshakable conviction. It is to know of the verity and divinity of the Lord’s work on earth.

But this is not all. It is more than believing and knowing. We must be doers of the word and not hearers only. It is more than lip service; it is not simply confessing with the mouth the divine Sonship of the Savior. It is obedience and conformity and personal righteousness. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21.)

To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to “press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men.” It is to “endure to the end.” (2 Ne. 31:20.) It is to live our religion, to practice what we preach, to keep the commandments. It is the manifestation of “pure religion” in the lives of men; it is visiting “the fatherless and widows in their affliction” and keeping ourselves “unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27.)

To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to bridle our passions, control our appetites, and rise above carnal and evil things. It is to overcome the world as did he who is our prototype and who himself was the most valiant of all our Father’s children. It is to be morally clean, to pay our tithes and offerings, to honor the Sabbath day, to pray with full purpose of heart, to lay our all upon the altar if called upon to do so.

To be valiant in the testimony of Jesus is to take the Lord’s side on every issue. It is to vote as he would vote. It is to think what he thinks, to believe what he believes, to say what he would say and do what he would do in the same situation. It is to have the mind of Christ and be one with him as he is one with his Father.

Our doctrine is clear; its application sometimes seems to be more difficult. Perhaps some personal introspection might be helpful. For instance:

Am I valiant in the testimony of Jesus if my chief interest and concern in life is laying up in store the treasures of the earth, rather than the building up of the kingdom?

Am I valiant if I have more of this world’s goods than my just needs and wants require and I do not draw from my surplus to support missionary work, build temples, and care for the needy?

Am I valiant if my approach to the Church and its doctrines is intellectual only, if I am more concerned with having a religious dialogue on this or that point than I am on gaining a personal spiritual experience?

Am I valiant if I am deeply concerned about the Church’s stand on who can or who cannot receive the priesthood and think it is time for a new revelation on this doctrine?

Am I valiant if I use a boat, live in a country home, or engage in some other recreational pursuit on weekends that takes me away from my spiritual responsibilities?

Am I valiant if I engage in gambling, play cards, go to pornographic movies, shop on Sunday, wear immodest clothes, or do any of the things that are the accepted way of life among worldly people?

If we are to gain salvation, we must put first in our lives the things of God’s kingdom. With us it must be the kingdom of God or nothing. We have come out of darkness; ours is the marvelous light of Christ. We must walk in the light.

Now I don’t pretend to be able to read the future, but I have a very strong feeling that conditions in the world are not going to get better. They are going to get worse until the coming of the Son of Man, which is the end of the world, when the wicked will be destroyed.

I think the world is going to get worse, and the faithful portion of the Church, at least, is going to get better. The day is coming, more than ever has been the case in the past, when we will be under the obligation of making a choice, of standing up for the Church, of adhering to its precepts and teachings and principles, of taking the counsel that comes from the apostles and prophets whom God has placed to teach the doctrine and bear witness to the world. The day is coming when this will be more necessary than has ever been the case in our day or at any time in our dispensation.

Now this is the Lord's work. It is God's work. It is our Father's business. His hand is in it. There is nothing in this world that compares in any way in importance with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the power of God unto salvation, and if we will walk and live and be and move and breathe and think the gospel and its cause, always and everlastingly, then we can have peace and joy and happiness in this life and we can go on to eternal glory in the life to come.

We teach and we testify. We have here this day taught eternal principles of truth; and whenever we teach by the power of the Holy Spirit, it becomes our prerogative to bear witness and testimony that the doctrines we have proclaimed are true and that if men will abide by and conform to them, all the blessings that a gracious Father desires to confer upon them will be theirs.

I bear witness of the truth of the doctrines that have been proclaimed and testify anew that Jesus is the Lord, that salvation is in him, that his is the only name under heaven whereby we may be saved in God's kingdom.

God grant us the wisdom and vision and determination, the valiance and courage, to fight manfully in his army and to be, as President George Albert Smith so graphically expressed it, "on the Lord's side of the line." In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.