

“Be Strong in the Lord, and in the Power of His Might”

M. RUSSELL BALLARD

You have been blessed, brothers and sisters, to frequently receive counsel and instruction from others of my Brethren. I am aware that I must have the power of the Spirit with me if I am to teach you anything worthwhile. You will also need the power of the Spirit with you. I pray that this may be the case with each of us tonight.

I marvel that through the miracle of technology I not only speak to those of you here in the Marriott Center but also to many thousands more who are with us through the wonders of satellite and Internet technology. On behalf of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, I extend a warm welcome to each of you, regardless of where you are. Here in Utah we have just concluded the 2002 Winter Olympics. It has been a most remarkable time, one that we will never forget. Although all who qualified to participate are to be highly commended, those great athletes who won the gold, silver, and bronze medals demonstrated commitment, sacrifice, and discipline that were remarkable to see. Their dedication to reach their goals through hard work and focused attention to details made them world champions. I am sure we will see the same rewards of hard work among the Paralympic athletes who will begin their competition in just a few days.

Tonight I would like to talk with you about what you must do to win the eternal gold that our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ have prepared for the faithful followers of Christ. This prize excels any other accomplishment in life. The great thing about this contest is that each one of you is in the competition, and each one of you can win the gold medal of eternal life.

I shall try to speak to you as if it were just you and me sitting in my living room, sharing some thoughts about your challenges to stay focused on keeping the commandments of God.

The scriptures describe our day as one that will be both “great and dreadful” (D&C 110:16). The greatness of our day is that we live when the Church of Jesus Christ is restored fully to the earth with all of its doctrines, with the priesthood, and with all of the saving ordinances. We have additional books of scripture and are led by prophets, seers, and revelators. We see the Church fulfilling its mission to spread across the world, and we see temples

M. Russell Ballard was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 3 March 2002.

built and operating in many countries. At the same time, the “dreadfulness” of our day is evident in such things as the events of September 11. This tragedy alone brought the whole world to the painful, dreadful reality that evil is rampant in the world. We also live in a day where there are very real and very prevalent spiritual dangers. Note the words of our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, in our last general conference:

But wonderful as this time is, it is fraught with peril. Evil is all about us. It is attractive and tempting and in so many cases successful. . . .

*. . . We live in a season when fierce men do terrible and despicable things. We live in a season of war. We live in a season of arrogance. We live in a season of wickedness, pornography, immorality. All of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah haunt our society. Our young people have never faced a greater challenge. We have never seen more clearly the lecherous face of evil. [In CR, October 2001, 4; or “Living in the Fulness of Times,” *Ensign*, November 2001, 5–6]*

As the Lord predicted in the preface to the Doctrine and Covenants, we now see the time when “the devil shall have power over his own dominion” (D&C 1:35). Is it any wonder that some are dismayed and disturbed by what they see? Yet, my dear young friends, we do not find President Hinckley or the other apostles and prophets wallowing in despair, nor do we sense even the smallest touch of hopelessness. The opposite is true. As President Hinckley also said in our last conference:

*Now, I do not wish to be an alarmist. I do not wish to be a prophet of doom. I am optimistic. I do not believe the time is here when an all-consuming calamity will overtake us. . . . There is so much of the Lord’s work yet to be done. We, and our children after us, must do it. [In CR, October 2001, 89; or “The Times in Which We Live,” *Ensign*, November 2001, 74]*

This hope and optimism comes because we know, with absolute certainty, that God is in His heaven and He is the Lord Omnipotent. God’s wisdom and knowledge and power are greater than all the combined forces of evil. He is able to work His will, and His purposes cannot be frustrated (see D&C 3:1). He has not left you and me to make our way alone in these perilous times. He is watching over His people. Note just a few of the scriptural promises to us:

- “He will preserve the righteous by his power” (1 Nephi 22:17).
- “The righteous need not fear; for . . . they shall be saved” (1 Nephi 22:17).
- “The Lord shall have power over his saints, and shall reign in their midst” (D&C 1:36).
- Zion shall be “a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety” (D&C 45:66).

My beloved young brothers and sisters, those promises are sure. Peace. Refuge. Safety. That is what our Father wants for His children. But those promises are also conditional. They are extended to those who turn to Him and accept the counsel and guidance He has so freely given us.

Long before the world was formed, Satan and those who followed after him raged against the forces of good and tried to overthrow the work of God. That struggle has not ended, only shifted battlegrounds. It is ruthless, and relentless; the objective of the battle is your eternal soul and mine.

The Apostle Paul spoke of how to arm ourselves for this conflict in these very graphic terms:

Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the

rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.
[Ephesians 6:10–13]

How do we put on the whole armor of God so that we may, as Paul promises, “be able to withstand in the evil day”?

I like to think of this spiritual armor not as a solid piece of metal molded to fit the body, but more like chain mail. Chain mail consists of dozens of tiny pieces of steel fastened together to allow the user greater flexibility without losing protection. I say that because it has been my experience, covering many more years than you have yet been privileged to live, that there is not one great and grand thing we can do to arm ourselves spiritually. True spiritual power lies in numerous smaller acts woven together in a fabric of spiritual fortification that protects and shields from all evil.

It is a common expression to talk about the “chinks” in a person’s armor. The definition of the word chink is “a crack, cleft, . . . a narrow opening” (*Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* [1996], s.v. “chink,” 361). Should an arrow strike exactly one of the chinks in one’s armor, a fatal wound can result.

I would like to suggest to you six ways we may protect ourselves by eliminating any chinks or gaps in our personal spiritual armor.

1. Rely on the Protective Power of Prayer

There are numerous teachings about the importance of prayer found throughout the scriptures, but one specifically ties prayer to power, especially the power to resist temptation. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches: “Pray always, that you may come off conqueror; yea, that you may conquer Satan, and that you may escape the hands of the servants of Satan that do uphold his work” (D&C 10:5).

What a wonderful promise! In this spiritual warfare that rages over individual souls, that is what we want more than anything else—to conquer Satan and to escape the hands of evil men and women who carry out his work. I cannot stress too highly the protective power that comes into our lives through earnest, humble, consistent, yearning prayer.

I know you believe that; but in the hectic, pressure-filled schedules you face, I also know how easy it is to let prayer slip. Some of you hit the snooze button on your alarm clocks, thinking you can eke out just another minute or two of sleep, then jerk awake realizing that you are going to be late for school or work. On such mornings prayer gets pushed aside, perhaps with a feeble promise to yourself that you will do better tomorrow. Put the alarm clock where you can’t reach it from bed; that will solve this problem. Sometimes you return home late at night, exhausted and eager to collapse into bed. You may go through the motions of prayer in a perfunctory and superficial manner, but that is not the kind of prayer that helps us conquer Satan.

I know many of you live in apartments where you have four or five roommates. The television or stereo may be on day and night. People talk loudly enough that even in your bedroom you can hear them clearly. There is laughter, noise, interruptions. In such circumstances it is a challenge to find a time and a place where you can be alone with your Heavenly Father. The Savior spoke of entering our closets to pray (see Matthew 6:6), suggesting the importance of privacy and quiet when we talk with God. For most of you, your closets will not allow this to happen, so you need to find a time and place where you can be alone with the Lord and pour out your heart to Him, that you might add strength and power to your spiritual lives. Every honest and sincere prayer adds another piece to chain mail armor.

Perhaps there are some of you who have slipped into patterns of behavior that you know

in your heart are displeasing to the Lord. You feel unworthy and ashamed to approach your Father in Heaven. “I’ll repent first,” you say to yourselves, “and then I’ll begin saying my prayers again.” I tell you with all soberness that those thoughts are not from the Lord, but come from the evil one. Nephi said it very clearly: “The evil spirit teacheth not a man to pray, but teacheth him that he must not pray” (2 Nephi 32:8).

It is when we are lost in the mists of darkness and cannot find our way that we most desperately need the influence of the Lord. Nowhere in all of the scriptural injunctions on prayer do we find the suggestion that we must first be perfect in order to communicate with God.

A further word of caution. I often hear people say “I told the Lord” this or “I told the Lord” that. Be careful not to “tell” Him but, rather, humbly seek and ask your Heavenly Father for guidance and direction. Prayer should be yearning and filled with gratitude.

My young friends, one of the most important ways to clothe yourselves in the armor of God is to make sure that prayer—earnest, sincere, consistent prayer—is part of our daily lives.

2. Rely on the Protective Power of the Scriptures

There is another very direct and specific promise about how to gain spiritual power and protection. When Nephi’s brothers asked him what the meaning of the rod of iron was, Nephi explained:

I said unto them that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction. [1 Nephi 15:24]

Isn’t that the protective power that we all seek? To resist the temptations of Satan. To not be blinded by his cunning ways. Knowledge gained through our study of the scriptures

teaches us how to get protection from the devil for ourselves.

Note the choice of verbs Nephi used. He did not talk about merely reading the scriptures. He did not suggest that we only study the word of God. He said that we must “hearken” to the word of God and “hold fast” to it. How do we “hold fast” to the word? This implies much more than a cursory, occasional reading. We not only need to read and study and learn the scriptural content, we must hearken to it, follow the principles taught therein, and cling to those principles as though our very lives depended on it—which, if we are speaking of spiritual life, is literally true.

Alma taught that there is great power in the word (see Alma 31:5), but this power won’t come by simply having the Book of Mormon on your bed stand. It won’t come by having your parents bear testimony of the truthfulness of the scriptures. They cannot hold fast to the iron rod for you; only you can do that.

Again, as I think about your schedules and the pressures you face at this time in your lives, I can understand why scripture study can so easily be neglected. You have many demands pulling at you. (In some cases, just maintaining your social life is a full-time occupation.) But I plead with you to make time for immersing yourselves in the scriptures. Couple scripture study with your prayers. Half an hour each morning privately studying, pondering, and communicating with your Heavenly Father can make an amazing difference in your lives. It will give increased success in your daily activities. It will bring increased alertness to your minds. It will give you comfort and rock-steady assurance when the storms of life descend upon you.

Here are some practical suggestions that I hope will help you derive greater power from your study of the scriptures:

- If possible, set a consistent time and place to study when you can be alone and -

undisturbed. Knowing the lifestyle of many young adults, I think it is safe to say that early morning in your apartments is one time you can be both alone and have it quiet.

- Always have a marking pencil ready as you study. Make notations in the margins. Write cross-references. Make the scriptures yours by marking them.
- Commit yourself to study for a set amount of time, rather than to just read a chapter or a certain number of pages. Sometimes a single verse or short passage will take the entire time as you think about it and consider what it means for you.
- Study topically as well as chronologically. Both approaches have merit, but we need to go to the Topical Guide or the index from time to time and read all that the Lord has said on repentance or faith or some other principle.
- Take time to ponder, reflect, meditate, and pray about what you read. Ask yourselves questions such as “What can I learn from this passage that will help me come unto Christ and be more like Him?”

One thing I have learned in life is how frequently the Lord answers our questions and gives us counsel through the scriptures. It is not unusual for one of us in the Quorum of the Twelve to say, “I saw this teaching more clearly than ever before in this verse of scripture.” Let us then go to the Lord in prayer, pleading for help or answers; and those answers will come as we open the scriptures and begin to study them. Sometimes it is as though a passage hundreds or thousands of years old was dictated specifically to answer our question.

Remember the promise of the Lord: If you “hold fast” to the word of God, the fiery darts of the adversary will not penetrate your chain mail. Your spiritual armor will be strong.

3. Draw on the Merciful Grace of God

This is one of the most important ways we are given to fortify ourselves in time of peril. As the Lord promised us through the prophet Moroni:

If men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.
[Ether 12:27]

There are several interesting things about that scripture. First is that the Lord gives us weaknesses—not sin, but weaknesses—so that we may be humble. Think about that for a moment. If we were perfect in every respect, it would be hard to be humble. Even in specific things, humility comes harder to those who are very strong in one area or another. The woman or man who is remarkably beautiful or handsome can easily become proud of her or his appearance. A brilliant scholar may look down in condescension on those less intellectually blessed. Our weaknesses help us to be humble.

Then comes the promise. If we are willing to humble ourselves, then, as it says, “My grace is sufficient.” In the Bible Dictionary *grace* is defined as “an enabling power” (s.v. “grace,” 697). Can you see the significance of that promise?

One of the signs of our day is how frequently we use the word *addiction* to describe destructive behavior. We talk about being addicted to alcohol, about drug addiction, and, more recently, of addiction to pornography. These are all insidious and powerful evils. Jesus warned His disciples that “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). Alma used a similar metaphor when he warned us about “the chains of hell” (Alma 12:11).

One of the most devastating effects of sin is that it weakens you, binds you, brings you down to slavery. The grace of God and of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the answer to that predicament. If you will but humble yourselves and turn to Them, then Their grace, Their enabling power, can not only help you throw off the chains of sin but actually turn your weaknesses into strengths.

My young brothers and sisters, how I long to have the reality of that promise sink into your hearts. Are you struggling with some sin or weakness? It can be something as simple as not having the willpower to rise in the morning early enough to have time for scripture study and prayer. It can be something so powerful, such as Internet pornography or lack of moral self-control, that you feel like you have been pulled down into an abyss and there is no hope for you. Do you find yourself hating what you are doing but not able to find the willpower to turn away from it? Then reach out and humble yourself. The Lord's enabling power is sufficient to change your heart, to turn your life, to purge your soul. But you must make the first move, which is to humble yourself and realize that only in God can you find deliverance.

4. Watch Yourself

This commandment was given by King Benjamin in his last great address to his people. After counseling them on various gospel principles and warning them against certain sins, he said:

But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God . . . , ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not. [Mosiah 4:30]

I have thought much about what King Benjamin meant by that phrase and its implications for each of us. Here are some of the things that I have concluded:

Often in the scriptures the Lord speaks of watchmen on the towers and of watchtowers themselves (see, for example, D&C 101:12, 43–60). A watchtower is generally raised so that someone can climb to the top and see a greater distance. In this way they are alerted to danger or threat much sooner than they would otherwise be.

The same principle holds true in our lives. We can raise watchtowers that help us deal with threats before they actually descend upon us. Let me give some examples.

Bishops often hear in confessions of moral transgression a statement something like this: "I was so sure that I would never be caught in this problem. Somehow we got carried away, and then it was too late." The physical and emotional drives associated with physical affection are powerful, lowering the will to resist and often sweeping people on to things they will later deeply regret.

It is not enough to simply say, "I will never do that." This is an excellent example of where we need to "watch ourselves." The wise couple will build watchtowers to protect themselves from being swept away. These are simple things, such as limiting the time they are alone together; strictly avoiding dark, isolated places; and setting strict limits on the bounds of their physical affection. To wait until you are caught up in the passion of the moment to start building watchtowers is to wait until the enemy is upon you, and often it is too late.

I know that there are some of you who are struggling with the tenacious power of Internet pornography. You come away from such encounters ashamed and sickened, vowing that you will never again allow yourself to give in to such temptation. Such determination is good, but you need to take intervening action when you are calm and away from the influence of those images. Move your computer into a room where there is always the possibility of someone walking in on you. Make sure

the monitor faces the room so that others can see what it is you are doing on the screen at any time. There are inexpensive software programs that screen out pornographic sites and eliminate unsolicited pornographic e-mail. Take action when you are strong so that if you are tempted you will have armed yourself and it will be much more difficult to fall.

It is such a logical thing to prepare for danger or discomfort in the natural world. Mountain climbers are very careful to pack the proper gear. Arctic explorers do not wait until the blasts of subzero winds strike them to decide what clothing they need. So why don't we do the same in our spiritual lives?

These are but a few examples of how you can take preventive and protective action so you are covered with the full armor of God. Remember: "It is far better to prepare and prevent than it is to repair and repent."

5. Don't Waste the Days of Your Probation

The scripture from which this phrase comes is found in 2 Nephi: "Wo unto him that has the law given, . . . that wasteth the days of his probation" (2 Nephi 9:27).

How does one "waste" the days of this probation? Turning to sin is surely part of it, but there is another, more subtle way, a way that may not seem evil at all. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord gave a similar warning in these words: "Thou shalt not idle away thy time, neither shalt thou bury thy talent that it may not be known" (D&C 60:13).

Why would I speak of that with you? Because one of the ways Satan lessens your effectiveness and weakens your spiritual strength is by encouraging you to spend large blocks of your time doing things that matter very little. I speak of such things as sitting for hours on end watching television or videos; playing video games night in and night out; surfing the Internet; or devoting huge blocks of time to sports, games, or other recreational activities.

Don't misunderstand me. These activities are not wrong in and of themselves (unless, of course, you are watching salacious programs or seeking out pornographic images on the Internet). Games, sports, recreational activities, and even television can be relaxing and rejuvenating, especially in times when you are under stress or heavily scheduled. You need activities that help you to unwind and rest your minds. It is healthy to go onto the soccer field or the basketball court and participate in vigorous physical activity. So, again I say, these things are not wrong in and of themselves.

No, I speak of letting things get out of balance. It is not watching television but watching television hour after hour, night after night. Does not that qualify as idling away your time? What will you say to the Lord when He asks what you have done with the precious gift of life and time? Surely you will not feel comfortable telling Him that you were able to pass the 100,000-point level in a challenging video game.

This idea of not wasting the days of our probation has deeper significance. One of the greatest challenges of this life is the ordering of priorities. If we do not do this wisely, then things that matter most in life are at the mercy of things that matter least.

This is a most important time in your lives. As single young adults you face some of the most critical and pivotal decisions of mortality: serving a mission, education and career, marriage. This time in your lives is a time to focus on those decisions. *That takes time.* One devastating effect of idling away our time is that it deflects us from focusing on the things that matter most. Too many people are willing to sit back and let life just happen to them. It takes time to develop the attributes that will help you to be a well-balanced person. It takes time, prayer, and pondering to determine what kind of man or woman you want to marry. It takes time, prayer, pondering, and much more effort

to become the kind of man or woman *your eternal partner* wants to marry.

We hear of students, both male and female, who are so focused on academic success or moving up the career ladder that they “don’t have time for dating.” We hear young people say that they will postpone marriage or having children until they can afford them. Let me tell you as a father of seven children, you will never be able to afford them! So just trust in the Lord as Sister Ballard and I did. Somehow it works, with His help. Others want to wait “until I graduate,” “until we can buy a home,” or “until I’m settled in my career.” I am reminded of a statement sometimes cited by President Boyd K. Packer: “There are many who struggle and climb and finally reach the top of the ladder only to find that it is leaning against the wrong wall” (*That All May Be Edified* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 275). Now is the time to carefully evaluate which walls you are approaching with your ladders.

Sooner or later in life you will be released from every calling in the Church. Perhaps my release is not the best alternative, but it will surely come. You will quit or retire from every position in life except two: You brethren will never be released from being a husband and a father. You sisters will never be released from being a wife and a mother. You cannot be exalted without an eternal mate. That is the sum of it. You young men especially need to remember that

in the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees;

And in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage];

And if he does not, he cannot obtain it.

He may enter into the other, but that is the end of his kingdom; he cannot have an increase. [D&C 131:1–4]

Remember, you *can* be exalted without a college degree. You *can* be exalted without being slender and beautiful. You *can* be exalted without having a successful career. You *can* be exalted if you are not rich and famous. So focus the best that you can on those things in life that will lead you back to the presence of God—keeping all things in their proper balance. There are those who may never marry in mortality. But *all* of God’s blessings will ultimately come to those who are righteous and true to the gospel.

Oh, my dear young brothers and sisters, these are the days of your probation. This time is a precious window of opportunity to prepare for your future. Do not waste this time away. Get out a paper and pencil and write down the things that matter most to you. List the goals that you hope to accomplish in life and what things are required if they are to become a reality for you. Plan and prepare and then do.

6. Remember That Reverence Invites Revelation

I shall dwell on this only briefly, but it is of great importance in spiritually fortifying yourselves. A lack of reverence opens up not just chinks in our chain mail armor but creates great gaps of vulnerability.

In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord declared that “your minds in times past have been darkened because . . . you have treated lightly the things you have received” (D&C 84:54). That is a recurring theme in the revelations. “Trifle not with sacred things,” the Lord warned Oliver Cowdery (D&C 6:12).

In a time of peril and danger, the last thing we need is to have our minds darkened. And yet we have seen a great increase in how the world treats lightly and often offensively things of deep value. The media jokes and pokes fun at even the most sacred things. Television sitcoms, as they are called, show people constantly engaging in crude, rude, immoral, and cruel banter.

When we speak of reverence, we are talking about much more than mere quietness at our meetings. Reverence is an attitude of mind and heart. It involves a keen sense of God's majesty and infinite goodness and our unworthiness and our need for Him and His redeeming grace. It includes a profound sense of the sacred and a desire to honor and protect it.

President Boyd K. Packer said:

Reverence invites revelation. . . .

No one of us can survive in the world of today, much less in what it soon will become, without personal inspiration. The spirit of reverence can and should be evident in every organization in the Church and in the lives of every member. [In CR, October 1991, 28–29; or “Reverence Invites Revelation,” Ensign, November 1991, 22–23]

Without belaboring that point, may I say just a few things that some of you may need to consider? As leaders, we see some patterns related to reverence that, if not corrected, may open up chinks in your spiritual armor. For example, we have noticed a growing trend in the Church, but especially among young adults, to arrive late at sacrament meeting, priesthood, and other meetings. Bishops and stake presidents report some members coming in as late as half an hour after the meeting has started. Occasionally there may be a legitimate excuse for not arriving on time (such as an emergency appendectomy), but in most cases it is because you simply plan poorly or do not care enough. The ideal would be to arrive five or ten minutes early so you can sit in the chapel quietly listening to the prelude music and preparing yourselves to worship. Our sacrament meetings belong to the Savior. When you arrive late, it not only interrupts the reverence of others, but it is a sign of your own disrespect and apathy.

Far too often we see young adults who persist in whispering during the administration of the sacrament. Their minds and hearts are obviously not focused on the emblems of which we partake.

It is hard for me to comprehend how anyone who has an understanding and an appreciation for the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ could allow this to happen.

Here are a few other concerns:

- Each human soul is precious in the sight of God (see D&C 18:10). To belittle or ridicule someone who has traits that you view as peculiar or to speak in a demeaning manner of members of the opposite sex is offensive to God.
- Gossip and the passing on of half-truths or untruths about others will, likewise, cause you to lose power.
- Joking about sacred things, or speaking of them in inappropriate places or in inappropriate ways, is a sign of irreverence. Off-color language or swearing is offensive and wrong.
- The intimate relationship between a man and a woman is one of the most sacred aspects of the Lord's plan. Vulgar jokes and bawdy comments about this relationship deeply offend the Spirit.

By carefully cultivating an attitude of reverence in these matters you will strengthen the power and the influence the Spirit has in your life. Remember, “reverence invites revelation.”

The Lord has given us specific doctrines and principles that show us how to clothe ourselves in the armor of God so that we can stand against the powers of evil. I have tried to suggest a few ways to incorporate gospel principles into your lives. In most cases we are not talking about massive changes of behavior. As with chain mail, you need simply to add small, individual pieces of armor each day through prayer, scripture study, focusing on things that matter, and by acting in a reverent manner.

In the closing session of last conference, President Hinckley made this simple but wonderful declaration: “Our safety lies in the virtue of our lives. Our strength lies in our righteousness. God has made it clear that if we will not forsake Him, He will not forsake us” (in *CR*, October 2001, 112; or “Till We Meet Again,” *Ensign*, November 2001, 90).

I close as I began. We are all in the contest of seeking to live eternally with our Heavenly Father and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. All that They have can be ours. What They offer far excels any earthly accomplishment. So, my dear young friends, “go for the real

gold.” Go forward, keeping the commandments of God and following the admonition of the Apostle Paul:

Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

[Ephesians 6:10–11]

I leave you my witness that Jesus is the Christ. He lives and presides over His Church. He loves the young adults of His Church, and I humbly pray and invoke a blessing upon each one of you. In the sacred and beloved name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.