

“Be of Good Cheer”

CECIL O. SAMUELSON

Graduates, families, brothers, sisters, faculty, staff, and friends—as you know, we have gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of those concluding this phase of their academic quests and to honor them for their achievements. In doing so, we also honor those of you who have played such key roles in the lives of those we identify for the special recognitions of the day. The names of the graduates and honorees are found in the official program. While the names of others assisting are not so recorded, the contributions of many kinds and the necessary support rendered are not diminished but likewise should be celebrated. In this we include spouses, parents, children, other family members, friends, classmates, faculty members, teachers, and mentors. We also honor with great respect and appreciation our board of trustees and other Church leaders, the faithful tithe payers of the Church, and the very many whose offerings and donations have enriched and enlarged the education and experiences of today’s graduates.

I hope each of us realizes, at least in part, what a rich blessing it is to be at BYU. We are better prepared to receive and achieve the

wonderful advantages and opportunities that life has yet to offer us because of what has happened to us here.

As has been increasingly the case in recent years, the world is experiencing more than a little turmoil. Our economy is unsettled, and many of our sacred values are being challenged, perhaps as never before. We are confronted regularly in different venues by very pessimistic people who tend to excuse their negativity as “only being realistic.”

Make no mistake: we live in challenging times. We must recognize, however, that what we are experiencing is no surprise to prophets of the past or to those of the present. In fact, much of what is occurring today is fully consistent with prophecy. Without minimizing the risks and uncertainties of our day, I am grateful for the ultimate optimism we can enjoy because of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we listen carefully to President Monson and

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others of our prophet leaders, we can be confident in their positive outlook about our future. One of President Hinckley's favorite responses when confronted with heavy or difficult problems was to say, "It will all work out." My promise to you today is that these prophet leaders are right, and things will eventually turn out as they should.

Please understand that I am not preaching passivity, nor am I suggesting in any way that each of us needs not do her or his very best. Likewise, I am not proposing that the troubles of our time are not real or serious. They are, and being concerned is not unreasonable. It is also most appropriate to have confidence that things will eventually turn out positively for those who pay attention to proper priorities and heed the counsel of the Lord's servants. For those of you who are married, you know what those priorities are. For those of you not quite there yet, don't give up or be deflected from your appropriate dreams. I personally take great comfort from this promise of the Lord found in the sixty-fourth section of the Doctrine and Covenants: "But all things must come to pass in their time" (verse 32). Perhaps, unfortunately, "their time" or the Lord's time might not fit our presently conceived timetables.

For those of you who have accepted employment or positions for further education, I encourage you to do your very best in this competitive world. For those of you still searching for the perfect situation or any job at all, I encourage you to be wise, thoughtful, and relentless. For those of you who will be turning your full attention to home, children, or the support of your spouse, you will need to do all of these things and more!

Whatever your circumstance, it will work out well eventually if you do your best to cause it to happen. Sometimes these trials are blessings in disguise, and what the Lord may have

in store for you later could be dramatically better than your current conception of optimal achievement.

I am impressed by the counsel of Jesus given frequently and in varying circumstances to "be of good cheer." It is true that He never minimized problems, challenges, or difficulties. Indeed, He often prophetically predicted them. It is also true that He always placed the seemingly negative in a positive context for those willing to trust, follow, and obey Him. I would not be surprised if He were to send a message directly to us today in the midst of our interesting circumstances. He would say, "Be of good cheer." His counsel also would be never to forget the basics or the promises He and His Father have made to those who honor and obey Them.

In addition to the expertise, content competence, specialized skills, and broad educational achievements you have attained while at BYU, I expect with some very good evidence that you have also strengthened your faith and testimonies in the things of highest value and most lasting importance. Both the Mission and Aims of your BYU education have been crafted precisely to optimally prepare you to deal properly with the difficulties you will face both proximally now and throughout your future lives. Keep the big picture in mind. Remember to exercise your faith and carefully prioritize your time and your efforts. Remember, as Jesus counsels us to be of good cheer, He also asks that we keep His commandments and love one another as He has loved us.

Please accept my sincere congratulations on your achievements. Know that you have our confidence as you take the next exciting steps in your journey of life that will include growth, service, challenges, and ultimately great joy as you live as you know you should. I leave my blessing and best wishes with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.