

# Missionary Work, Valiance, Obedience, Forgiveness, Testimony

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I appreciate this opportunity to join with you this morning. I have enjoyed thoroughly the music and the prayer that have been offered.

My purpose in coming to you today is to offer you some insights into four of five different subjects that obviously I can't cover thoroughly, but I'd like to discuss with you on a brief basis. First is missionary work. Next is the concept of being valiant; then come obedience and forgiveness and finally testimony.

## Do Missionary Work

May I just make a comment or two on missionary work. I received a letter recently from a missionary who came to see me a year or so ago with his girl friend. He had a desire to get married rather than go on a mission, and we discussed it. As usual, I didn't tell him what to do, but we discussed the ramifications and the urgings of the prophet and some of the scriptural connotations.

This letter was sent to me from this young man from the mission field. He went on his mission, and his fiancée is here someplace today, at least on this campus. I don't know if she's here. He ended his letter by saying, "We'll be back to see you when I get home." He was very complimentary in the opportunity for service they both had, having taken this direction.

May I just add that I would suggest to him—if for any reason he has a chance to read these remarks—that he not make the great mistake that many missionaries make: that is, don't send your companion to see your girl if your companion gets home before you.

The Doctrine and Covenants states:

*And again, I say unto you, I give you a commandment, that every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, go to with his might, with the labor of his hands, to prepare and accomplish the things which I have commanded.*

*And let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and meekness. [D&C 38:40–41]*

If we want a directive, if we want a baseline for what the Lord expects of us, I think this scripture gives it to us: "Every man, both elder, priest, teacher, and also member, . . . let your preaching be the warning voice, every man to his neighbor, in mildness and meekness." This

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is the scriptural basis for every member a missionary, and it outlines exactly what the Lord expects of us as members of his church.

This is the kingdom of God. And if it is the kingdom of God, then every soul on the face of this earth has a right to the opportunity to receive it, because every soul on the face of this earth is the son or the daughter of God. If that is to happen, it must happen by our own participation. It must happen by our own activity as far as touching the lives of the people around us. We must not be ashamed; we must step forward and be strong and outgoing in letting people know who we are and what this Church represents.

This scripture also has a meaning, as do other scriptures, relative to the group of young men who joined us in one portion of this building today, who are in the Language Training Mission and who are called as full-time missionaries; that is the responsibility of a young man who is able to go and perform missionary service in the church of Jesus Christ on a full-time basis. This has great significance in connection with his obligation to his priesthood and his obligation to his own baptismal covenant. A young lady isn't under that same obligation. Many go and they are welcome. But for a young lady it is more of an optional thing. For a young man, as the prophets have told us, missionary work is a priesthood responsibility. If you hold the priesthood, then you have some obligation to the people of the world to teach the gospel and to prepare yourself for full-time missionary service.

I had a man about my age come in to see me a few days ago. He told me a story about a 1947 Chevrolet. It was a little after the Second World War. He was a young elder, I guess, or priest—I'm not sure which. Anyway, he and his friend were called in to see the bishop one night after sacrament meeting, and they both knew what was coming up. The bishop said to the first young man, "We'd like you to prepare to go on a mission."

The young man replied, "All right, I'll do it."

And then the man who came in to see me was next. He went in and the bishop said, "We'd like you to prepare to go on a mission."

And he said, "Bishop, I can't do it because I am paying for a 1947 Chevrolet." He said that at that time of his life, this was the most important thing to him. He said, "I just don't see how I can do it." Well, one thing led to another, and he never did go. He came in to tell me how throughout his life he had regretted that decision so much that every time he sees a 1947 Chevrolet (and that is occasionally nowadays) he gets a sort of unhappy feeling in his heart. He relates it to something that he had an opportunity to do but didn't do.

There is a 1947 Chevrolet in each of our lives. There is some material thing that sooner or later will stand between what the Lord expects of us and what we know we should do. Then we have to make a decision, and may the Lord bless us that we may make a proper decision when our 1947 Chevrolet confronts us.

### **Be Valiant**

Next comes the concept of being valiant.

*And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament.*

*Behold, these are they who died without law; And also they who are the spirits of men kept in prison, whom the Son visited, and preached the gospel unto them, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh;*

*Who received not the testimony of Jesus in the flesh, but afterwards received it.*

*These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men . . .*

*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 76:71–75, 79; emphasis added]

I assume that this statement has reference to members of the Church, because it is talking about not being valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I looked up the word *valiant* in the dictionary and this is what it told me: “Stout-hearted, intrepid in danger, courageous, boldly brave, performed with valor or bravery, heroic, strong, meritorious, or excellence of its kind, fine, very good, brave.” The synonyms are *heroic, brave, courageous, and steadfast*. I like that word—*steadfast, intrepid*. The opposite of *valiant* is *fainthearted* and *cowardly*. “These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus. Wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of God.”

I think being valiant is measured in two ways. I think it is measured in the gospel of Jesus Christ in our individual lives when no one else is around. How valiant we are depends on how well we do when no one is looking at us or when we are among people who don’t know who we are. I think that is a good definition of being valiant. I think being valiant, in connection with the first point, can also be associated with our willingness to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and its truthfulness. Occasionally we find ourselves in the position where we are just a little too embarrassed to let people know who we really are, and I am wondering if that is being valiant. I’m sure that the Lord gives us opportunities to repent, but he has called on us to be valiant in our testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ in order for us to be heirs to the inheritance in the celestial kingdom.

A story in point about valiance: Zion’s Camp. Let me read you a page from Church history:

*Kirtland, February 14, 1835—This day a meeting was called of those who journeyed last season to Zion [that is, Zion’s Camp] for the purpose of*

*laying the foundation of the redemption, together with as many other of the brethren and sisters as were disposed to attend.*

*President Joseph Smith, Jr., presiding, read the fifteenth chapter of John, and said: Let us endeavor to solemnize our minds that we may receive a blessing, by calling on the Lord. After an appropriate and affecting prayer, the brethren who went to Zion [in Zion’s Camp] were requested to take their seats together in a part of the house by themselves.*

*President Smith then stated that the meeting had been called, because God had commanded it; and it was made known to him by vision and by the Holy Spirit. He then gave a relation of some of the circumstances attending us while journeying to Zion—our trials, sufferings; and said God had not designed all this for nothing, but He had it in remembrance yet; and it was the will of God that those who went to Zion, with the determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh. . . .*

*The President also said many things; such as the weak things, even the smallest and weakest among us, shall be powerful and mighty, and great things shall be accomplished by you from this hour; and you shall begin to feel the whisperings of the Spirit of God; and the work of God shall begin to break forth from this time; and you shall be endowed with power from on high. [Documentary History of the Church, 2:181–82]*

Remember Zion’s Camp? Remember the history? Remember how the Saints went up to free the land in Jackson County from which they had been driven off by mobs? Do you remember how there was no redress from the government? Remember how they marched all the way up there and didn’t fight? Do you remember how some of them got rebellious against the Prophet Joseph and others? Remember how cholera struck the camp and some people were struck down, as it were, in a moment? And then after all this, they

disbanded the camp and sent everybody home. Oh, what a great opportunity to say, “Joseph really missed it this time. What a waste of time! We certainly didn’t get anything accomplished. I wonder whether Joseph Smith knows what he is talking about.”

Elder Joseph Young, in his history of the organization of the seventies, says this about the meeting about which we just read:

*The following sentiment was delivered by the Prophet Joseph Smith in an address to the Elders assembled in Kirtland soon after the Seventies were organized: “Brethren, some of you are angry with me, because you did not fight in Missouri; but let me tell you, God did not want you to fight. He could not organize His kingdom with twelve men to open the Gospel door to the nations of the earth, and with seventy men under their direction to follow in their tracks, unless He took them from a body of men who had offered their lives, and who had made as great a sacrifice as did Abraham. Now the Lord has got His Twelve and His Seventy, and there will be other quorums of Seventies called, who will make the sacrifice, and those who have not made their sacrifices and their offerings now, will make them hereafter.” [Documentary History of the Church, 2:182]*

The interesting thing about Zion’s Camp is that nobody knew when they were going through it why they were going through it until the Lord told them later. Do you know that in everyone’s life comes a Zion’s Camp? Many times in the quiet and stillness of a personal relationship or while you are by yourself, and without realizing it, you are proving yourself to the Lord. Without realizing it, you are demonstrating whether you’re valiant in your testimony. May each one of us be able to meet our Zion’s Camp and understand that a Lord who knows all and understands what we are going through both in public and in private will bless us for the good that we accomplish and for the right decisions that we make. So much on the principle of being valiant.

## Be Obedient

The next principle is obedience.

*And it came to pass that he [Christ] stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying:*

*Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.*

*And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. [3 Nephi 11:9–11]*

The Savior goes on to point out that he strictly and unalterably and without hesitation did just exactly what his Father told him to do. He wrought the Atonement, he established salvation, he became the Savior of the world, and he provided the way for us because he was 100 percent obedient. And then he says in other places, “Go thou and do likewise. I was obedient so you could be saved. Now you be obedient, so that the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and repentance can be applicable in your life.”

The strict principle of obedience was established first of all by Jesus the Christ as a pattern by which we should live. Now, this is the hard kind of obedience. I was in the army a few years ago; that is the easy kind of obedience. They say, “Soldier, don’t you want to do that?”

And you say, “Yes, sir,” because the alternative is, or was, an Article 15 (I don’t know what they call it now). That is the easy kind of obedience because the penalties are so severe that you are happy to do what they want you to do.

Now, the hard kind of obedience is obedience with free agency. That is where you learn the principle, you know it is from God, you take a youthful, rebellious spirit (many times in youth comes a little bit of the rebellious in all of us), and you begin to mold that spirit and you begin to teach yourself the principle of self-discipline so

that you can do what the Lord God has asked you to do. If you are valiant in this, if you are loyal, if you are faithful, the promise is that the Holy Ghost will help you. But you have to wrestle with yourself and you have to begin to put yourself in harmony with that which God has called upon you to do.

Jesus Christ was strictly obedient to his Father, and we, too, need to be strictly obedient if we are to inherit the crown and if we are to follow the Savior. How can we follow or how can we be obedient to a Savior whom we have not yet seen if we can't be obedient to his servants whom we can see?

Finally, obedience is not seeing how close you can come to the line. I have a three-year-old boy at home who, among others, keeps us humble. He is a very active young man. He is constantly testing us. He says, "Can I do this?"

And we say, "No, that is not good for you. You shouldn't do that."

He says, "If I can't get that close to the line, can I get this close to the line?" He edges a little closer. Then he says, "Well, if this is still all right, how would it be if I stand here?" And finally he says, "Well, my toenails are on the line. Is that too close?" Sooner or later he's in trouble. The policies that are established are for us to follow through the principle of obedience. The principle of obedience is not to find out how close we can get to the line. You're in trouble if you violate the principle of obedience, because doing so is taking you in the wrong direction. Jesus the Christ established strict obedience to his Father so that we could be saved, and now he has asked us to go and do likewise and to develop obedience with free agency so that we might inherit that which he has offered to us. So much for obedience.

### **Be Forgiving**

Next is forgiveness.

*And behold, it is written, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;*

*But I say unto you, that ye shall not resist evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;*

*And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;*

*And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

*Give to him that asketh thee and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away.*

*And behold it is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;*

*But behold I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you . . .*

*Therefore I would that ye should be perfect, even as I, [notice this line again], or your Father who is in heaven in perfect. [3 Nephi 12:38–44, 48]*

One of the great principles of Christianity in the gospel of Jesus Christ is the ability to forgive. If in your life you have not yet been misjudged, or you have not yet been accused of something you haven't done, just hang on for a while because it will happen. You can count on it. It is part of the trials that no one gets out of this life without experiencing. Now, if you understand that, then you will realize that this is part of the test. How you face that test will determine whether you learn what it is that the Lord wants you to learn and whether you have a forgiving heart. You are going to be misjudged, and people are going to accuse you of something that you haven't done. If that begins to make you black inside, if you begin to think of how you can get even, if you begin to say to yourself, "Well, just wait! Just wait!" then you are back with the law of Moses, and the gospel of Jesus Christ has been trampled underfoot. For anybody can love someone who loves him, but it takes the Christian to love the person who persecutes him, but it takes the Christian to love the person who persecutes him or is unkind to him. May the Lord bless us



to be Christians in our ability to forgive and forget.

We have two great examples of forgiveness: One is Jesus Christ on the cross—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). The other is Joseph Smith, crossing the river to go to his doom—“For I have a conscience void of offense toward all men.” After what they went through, if they can show us the way, certainly we can forgive in our hearts and forget. So much for forgiveness.

### Gain a Testimony

Finally, testimony.

*Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend.*

*And again, believe that ye must repent of your sins and forsake them, and humble yourselves before God; and ask in sincerity of heart that he would forgive you; and now, if you believe all these things see that ye do them. [Mosiah 4:9–10; emphasis added]*

I heard a Chinese proverb once that went something like this: The person who hears truth is not the equal of the person who understands truth, and the person who understands truth is not the equal of the person who loves truth. So it is with a testimony. Some people hear the words; some people understand. We’re told even the devils believe, but it hasn’t made any difference in their lives. Then there are those who love the truth, and when that happens their life changes. When that happens, they live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ even when they’re on a desert island all by themselves, because they love the truth and they are committed to that principle of testimony so much that it has changed their lives.

Testimony is knowing that God lives and following him. Testimony is knowing that Jesus is the Christ and following him. Testimony is knowing that Joseph Smith was a true prophet and living the teachings he brought forth. Testimony is knowing that Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of God and following his example. Testimony is knowing the Church is true and supporting it. Testimony is knowing the Book of Mormon is the word of God and living its teachings.

He that hears is not the equal of the person who understands, and the person who understands is not the equal of the person who loves the truth. Can the eye say to the arm, “I have no need of thee”? Can a person say, “I know Joseph Smith was a prophet, yet I can’t live by some of these other things”? Can the leg say to the hand, “I have no need of thee”? (see 1 Corinthians 12:14–27). Certainly not. May the Lord bless us that our witness and testimony can cause us to know and to love and to do, because certainly therein is pure testimony.

May the Lord bless us in missionary work, in valiance, obedience, forgiveness, and testimony. Perhaps in these brief insights there might be something here of some value. We certainly pray that that is the case.

I bear you my witness as to the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I know God lives. I know he lives. I know Jesus the Christ is our Savior and Redeemer. I know Joseph Smith was a true prophet. I know Spencer W. Kimball is a prophet of God today and that he speaks in the name of Christ the Lord. I know that this is the church of Jesus Christ. I know that the Book of Mormon is true. I bear you that witness and pray the Lord to bless us all as we strive to do the things that we know must be done in order to inherit his kingdom, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.