

# *For Times of Trouble*

JEFFREY R. HOLLAND

I would like to be quite personal this morning—personal about you and personal about myself. I have thought about you a great deal over the past few weeks and have prayed to know what might be helpful to you. In doing so I have been drawn back to my own days as a student and some of the challenges I faced then. While such experiences now border on primitive history, fit only for a geology lecture, I'm nevertheless going ahead. I have wondered if some of your experiences and feelings might even now be very much the same.

I come this morning knowing the semester is nearly over and that what suggestions I offer were perhaps needed months ago. Furthermore, the year is nearly over and maybe for some an entire college career. But part of what I want to stress is that every day counts—including these remaining few in the semester—and that you have thousands of days thereafter. I will speak of you as you are right now and will hope it matters as much to the graduating senior as to the first-semester freshman.

I wish to speak today of a problem that is universal and that can, at any given hour, strike anywhere on campus—faculty, staff, administration, and especially students. I believe it is a form of evil. At least I know it can have damaging effects that block our growth,

dampen our spirit, diminish our hope, and leave us vulnerable to other more conspicuous evils. I address it here this morning because I know of nothing Satan uses quite so cunningly or cleverly in his work on a young man or woman in your present circumstances. I speak of doubt—especially self-doubt—of discouragement, and of despair.

In doing so I don't wish to suggest that there aren't plenty of things in the world to be troubled by. In our lives, individually and collectively, there surely are serious threats to our happiness. I watch an early morning news broadcast while I shave and then read a daily newspaper. That is enough to ruin anyone's day and by then it's only 6:30 in the morning. Iran, Afghanistan, inflation, energy, jogging, mass murders, kidnapping, unemployment, floods. With all of this waiting for us we are tempted, as W. C. Fields once said, to "smile first thing in the morning and get it over with." But my concerns for you today are not the

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national and international ones. I wish to speak a little more personally of those matters that do not make headlines in the *New York Times* but that may be important in your personal journal. I'm anxious this morning about your problems with school and love and finances and the future, about your troubles concerning a place in life and the value of your contribution, about your private fears regarding where you are going and whether you think you will ever get there. Against a backdrop of hostages and high prices I wish to speak more personally of you and fortify you, if I am able, against doubt—especially self-doubt—and discouragement and despair. This morning I want to attack double-digit depression.

In doing so, however, I wish at the outset to make a distinction F. Scott Fitzgerald once made, that “trouble has no necessary connection with discouragement—discouragement has a germ of its own, as different from trouble as arthritis is different from a stiff joint” (*The Crack-Up*, 1945). Troubles we all have, but the “germ” of discouragement, to use Fitzgerald’s word, is not in the trouble, it is in us. Or to be more precise, I believe it is in Satan, the Prince of Darkness, the Father of Lies. And he would have it be in us. It’s frequently a small germ, hardly worth going to the Health Center for, but it will work and it will grow and it will spread. In fact it can become almost a habit, a way of living and thinking, and there the greatest damage is done. Then it takes an increasingly severe toll on our spirit, for it erodes the deepest religious commitments we can make—those of faith, and hope, and charity. We turn inward and look downward, and these greatest of Christlike virtues are damaged or at very least impaired. We become unhappy and soon make others unhappy, and before long Lucifer laughs.

As with any other germ, a little preventive medicine ought to be practiced in terms of those things that get us down. There is a line from Dante that says, “The arrow seen before

cometh less rudely” (*Divine Comedy*). President John F. Kennedy put the same thought into one of his state of the union messages this way: “The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.” The Boy Scouts say it best of all: “Be prepared.” That isn’t just cracker-barrel wisdom with us; it is theology. “And angels shall fly through the midst of heaven, crying with a loud voice . . . Prepare ye, prepare ye” (D&C 88:92). “But if ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (D&C 38:30). And fear is part of what I wish to oppose this morning. The scriptures teach that preparation—prevention if you will—is perhaps the major weapon in your arsenal against discouragement and self-defeat.

For example, if as a student you are the way I was, you may be discouraged over money matters—and almost everyone is, at least some of the time. A recent study indicated that financially related problems outranked all other factors in marital difficulty by a margin of three to one. And the pressure can be about that great on single students as well. If shared misery provides any consolation for you, take heart—you have friends. From the day I walked into my first college class until I staggered out the exit of my last—a period of time stretching over twelve years and four degrees—I was responsible for every cent of my education. I know that many in this audience are getting through school exactly the same way—part-time jobs, loans, working spouses, an almost desperate plea for scholarships, postponed personal comforts, and all the rest. These things can be troublesome, but you have an obligation—to yourself if no one else—to see that they are not destructive. Prepare. “The arrow seen before cometh less rudely.” Take advantage at this tender age to learn to use a budget, to sit down at a table spread out with your debts and come to grips with the economic facts of life. It’s none too soon if you’ve made it to college and still have not had to establish personal fiscal priorities to decide what you will have at the expense of some

things you will not have. Get it down on paper and deal with it there. That is the counsel given to husbands and wives, and the same solution works for others. The alternative is to leave it churning in your stomach and head and heart, all of which are susceptible to their own forms of ulcer.

I see the Brethren labor over the wise use of the Church's resources. I see President Oaks labor over it for the university. I hope soon to see someone labor over it for our nation. You can consider it part of a very valuable education to labor over it in your own life. Plan. Prepare. Budget. Work. Save. Sacrifice. Spend cheerfully on things that matter. Smile at an old pair of shoes. Pay your tithing. Cherish a used book. Though some of you may be living in almost desperate financial straits, I promise you there is a way. Such times may be burdensome. Such sacrifice may be hard. But it does not have to lead—for you it must not lead—to despair and destruction and defeat. In the words of Henry David Thoreau:

*Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life are not only dispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind.* [Walden (1854), 1, "Economy"]

*Love your life, poor as it is. . . . The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's abode.* [Walden (1854), 18, "Conclusion"]

Now no one here need be so dramatic as to peer out of an almshouse, but you may be going without some things, you may even consider yourself poor. Well, "Love your life, poor as it is." "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:30).

Quite apart from the financial challenge, schoolwork itself can be quite a drag. (Hold your applause.) I suppose it's fair to say that math and English and economics and zoology

can be discouraging on certain days, especially as finals approach. But a little preparation can work wonders here as well. Otherwise, it's the night before the paper is due or the morning before the afternoon exam. And despair distills upon us as the dews from heaven. I plead with you, in making your university experience a pleasant and rewarding one, work conscientiously in the early weeks, and you'll work more cheerfully at the end.

I remember handing in a paper to Dean Bruce B. Clark who was at the time the teacher of an English literature class I was taking. I loved the class and knew from the first day of instruction that three short papers would be due on clearly stated dates during the term. Yet I left those papers—in every case, I think—until the night before they were due. I remember Dean Clark handing one of them back to me, saying something like "You had the makings of a good paper here. It's too bad you didn't spend more time on it." I was devastated. Here was the chairman of my major department, teaching only one class a semester that year, the very symbol of my academic hopes and dreams for the B.A., saying "You didn't work very hard." Oh, I had worked hard all right—from 9:00 the night before until 3:00 that morning—without stopping, without breathing.

Now, my young brothers and sisters, I *deserved* to be devastated. I should have been devastated. And it *could* have been a good paper. Perhaps that discouraged me more than anything. You see, *I* discouraged me. I discouraged *myself*. Remember, dear Brutus, "The fault . . . is not in our stars, but in ourselves" (William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*). And that's the worst kind of despair, the kind of self-despising that eats at our image and crushes our hopes. It isn't the class or the teacher or the paper. It never is. I simply should have done better. I should have been at work much sooner. I should have written a draft or two and then left it alone for a time. I should have

gone back to it in freshness and strength. I might even have asked for some suggestions. I should have reworked it and shaped it and fine-tuned it over several rewritings. At the end I should have been working with a scalpel; as it was I delivered one butchered idea, the meat axe still dripping as I walked into class. And furthermore, you don't type very well at 3:00 in the morning. The point is the same with school as with money or marriage or profession or any hope and dream. Prepare. Plan. Work. Sacrifice. Rework. Spend cheerfully on matters of worth. Carry the calm, and wear the assurance of having done the best you could with what you had. If you work hard and prepare earnestly, it will be very difficult for you to give in or give up or wear down. If you labor with faith in God and in yourself and in your future, you will have built upon a rock. Then, when the winds blow and the rains come—as surely they will—you shall not fall.

Of course, some things are not under your control. Some disappointments come regardless of your effort and preparation, for God wishes us to be strong as well as good. There, too, I say, "Love your life, poor as it is." Drive even these experiences into the corner, painful though they may be, and learn from them. In this, too, you have friends through the ages in whom you can take comfort and with whom you can form timeless bonds.

Thomas Edison devoted ten years and all of his money to developing the nickel-alkaline storage battery at a time when he was almost penniless. Through that period of time, his record and film production was supporting the storage battery effort. Then one night the terrifying cry of fire echoed through the film plant. Spontaneous combustion had ignited some chemicals. Within moments all of the packing compounds, celluloid for records, film, and other flammable goods had gone up with a roar. Fire companies from eight towns arrived, but the fire and heat were so intense and the water pressure so low that the fire hoses had

no effect. Edison was sixty-seven years old—no age to begin anew. His son Charles was frantic, wondering if he were safe, if his spirits were broken, and how he would handle a crisis such as this at his age. Charles saw his father running toward him. He spoke first.

He said, "Where's your mother? Go get her. Tell her to get her friends. They'll never see another fire like this as long as they live!"

At 5:30 the next morning, with the fire barely under control, he called his employees together and announced, "We're rebuilding." One man was told to lease all the machine shops in the area, another to obtain a wrecking crane from the Erie Railroad Company. Then, almost as an afterthought, he added, "Oh, by the way. Anybody know where we can get some money?" (Paraphrased from Charles Edison, "My Most Unforgettable Character," *Reader's Digest*, December 1961, pp. 175–77.)

Virtually everything you now recognize as a Thomas Edison contribution to your life came *after* that disaster. Remember, "Trouble has no necessary connection with discouragement—discouragement has a germ of its own."

If you are trying hard and living right and things still seem burdensome and difficult, take heart. Others have walked that way before you.

Do you feel unpopular and different, or outside the inside of things? Read Noah again. Go out there and take a few whacks on the side of your ark and see what popularity was like in 2500 B.C.

Does the wilderness stretch before you in a never-ending sequence of semesters? Read Moses again. Calculate the burden of fighting with the pharaohs and then a forty-year assignment in Sinai. Some tasks take time. Accept that. But as the scripture says, "They come to pass." They do end. We will cross over Jordan eventually. Others have proven it. I stand before you as a living symbol that anyone can make it through school, fill a mission, and find a job.

Are you afraid people don't like you? The Prophet Joseph Smith could share a few

thoughts with you on that subject. Has health been a problem? Surely you will find comfort in the fact that a veritable Job has led this Church into one of the most exciting and revelatory decades of this entire dispensation. President Kimball has known few days in the last thirty years that were not filled with pain or discomfort or disease. Is it wrong to wonder if President Kimball has in some sense become what he is not only *in spite* of the physical burdens but also in part *because* of them? Can you take courage from your shared sacrifice with that giant of a man who has defied disease and death, has shaken his fist at the forces of darkness and cried when there was hardly strength to walk, “Oh, Lord, I am yet strong. Give me one more mountain” (see Joshua 14:11–12).

Do you ever feel untalented or incapable or inferior? Would it help you to know that everyone else feels that way too, including the prophets of God? Moses initially resisted his destiny, pleading that he was not eloquent in language. Jeremiah thought himself a child and was afraid of the faces he would meet.

And Enoch? I ask all of you to remember Enoch as long as you live. This is the young man who, when called to a seemingly impossible task, said, “Why is it that I have found favor in thy sight, [I] am but a lad, and all the people hate me; for I am slow of speech?” (Moses 6:31).

Enoch was a believer. He stiffened his spine and squared his shoulders and went stutteringly on his way. Plain old, ungifted, inferior Enoch. And this is what the angels would come to write of him:

*And so great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly, so powerful was the word of*

*Enoch, and so great was the power of the language which God had given him. [Moses 7:13]*

Plain old, inadequate Enoch—whose name is now synonymous with transcendent righteousness. The next time you are tempted to paint your self-portrait dismal gray, highlighted with lackluster beige, just remember that in like manner have this kingdom’s most splendid men and women been tempted. I say to you as Joshua said to the tribes of Israel as they faced one of their most difficult tasks, “Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you” (Joshua 3:5).

There is, of course, one source of despair more serious than all the rest. It is linked with poor preparation of a far more serious order. It is the opposite of sanctification. It is the most destructive discouragement in time or eternity. It is transgression against God. It is depression embedded in sin.

Here your most crucial challenge, once you have recognized the seriousness of your mistakes, will be to believe that you can change, that there can be a different you. To disbelieve that is clearly a satanic device designed to discourage and defeat you. When you get home tonight, you fall on your knees and thank your Father in Heaven that you belong to a Church and have grasped a gospel that promises repentance to those who will pay the price. *Repentance* is not a foreboding word. It is following *faith*, the most encouraging word in the Christian vocabulary. Repentance is simply the scriptural invitation for growth and improvement and progress and renewal. You can change! You can be anything you want to be in righteousness.

If there is one lament I cannot abide—and I hear it from adults as well as students—it is the poor, pitiful, withered cry, “Well, that’s just the way I am.” If you want to talk about discouragement, that phrase is one that discourages me. Though not a swearing man, I am always sorely tempted to try my hand when I hear that. Please spare me your speeches about

“That’s just the way I am.” I’ve heard that from too many people who wanted to sin and call it psychology. And I use the word *sin* again to cover a vast range of habits, some seemingly innocent enough, that nevertheless bring discouragement and doubt and despair.

You can change anything you want to change, and you can do it very fast. That’s another satanic suckerpunch—that it takes years and years and eons of eternity to repent. It takes exactly as long to repent as it takes you to say, “I’ll change”—and mean it. Of course there will be problems to work out and restitutions to make. You may well spend—indeed you had better spend—the rest of your life proving your repentance by its permanence. But change, growth, renewal, and repentance can come for you as instantaneously as for Alma and the sons of Mosiah. Even if you have serious amends to make, it is not likely that you would qualify for the term, “the vilest of sinners,” which is the phrase Mormon uses in describing these young men. Yet as Alma recounts his own experience in the thirty-sixth chapter of the book that bears his name, his repentance appears to have been as instantaneous as it was stunning.

Do not misunderstand. Repentance is not easy or painless or convenient. It is a bitter cup from Hell. But only Satan, who dwells there, would have you think that a necessary and required acknowledgment is more distasteful than permanent residence. Only he would say, “You can’t change. You won’t change. It’s too long and too hard to change. Give up. Give in. Don’t repent. You are just the way you are.” That, my friends, is a lie born of desperation. Don’t fall for it.

As you know, the Brethren used to announce in general conference the names of those who had been called on missions. Not only was this the way friends and neighbors learned of the call, more often than not it was the way the missionary learned of it as well. One such prospect was Eli H. Pierce. A railroad

man by trade, he had not been very faithful in Church meetings—“even had my inclinations led in that direction, which I frankly confess they did not,” he admitted. His mind had been given totally to what he demurely calls “temporalities.” He said he had never read more than a few pages of scripture in his life and that he had spoken to only one public gathering (an effort which he says was no credit to himself or those who heard him). He used the vernacular of the railroad and the barroom with a finesse born of long practice. He bought cigars wholesale—a thousand at a time—and he regularly lost his paycheck playing pool. Then this classic understatement: “Nature never endowed me with a superabundance of religious sentiment; my spirituality was not high and probably even a little below average.”

Well, the Lord knew what Eli Pierce was, and he knew something else. He knew what I’m pleading for today. He knew what Eli Pierce could become. When the call came that October 5 in 1875, Eli wasn’t even in the Tabernacle. He was out working on one of the railroad lines. A fellow employee, once recovered from the shock of it all, ran out to telegraph the startling news. Brother Pierce writes, “At the very moment this intelligence was being flashed over the wires, I was sitting lazily thrown back in an office rocking chair, my feet on the desk, reading a novel and simultaneously sucking on an old Dutch pipe just to vary the monotony of cigar smoking.” (For my friends in the English Department I would just hasten to add that the novel reading was probably a more serious transgression than the pipe smoking.)

He goes on. “As soon as I had been informed of what had taken place, I threw the novel in the waste basket, the pipe in a corner [and have never touched either to this hour]. I sent in my resignation . . . to take effect at once, in order that I might have time for study and preparation. I then started into town to buy [scripture].”

Then these stirring words:

*Remarkable as it may seem, and has since appeared to me, a thought of disregarding the call, or of refusing to comply with the requirement, never once entered my mind. The only question I asked—and I asked it a thousand times—was: “How can I accomplish this mission? How can I, who am so shamefully ignorant and untaught in doctrine, do honor to God and justice to the souls of men, and merit the trust reposed in me by the Priesthood?”*

With such genuine humility fostering resolution rather than defeating it, Eli Pierce fulfilled a remarkable mission. His journal could appropriately close on a completely renovated life with this one line: “Throughout our entire mission we were greatly blessed.” But I add one experience to make the point.

During his missionary service, Brother Pierce was called in to administer to the infant child of a branch president whom he knew and loved. Unfortunately, the wife of the branch president had become embittered and now seriously objected to any religious activity within the home, including a blessing for this dying child. With the mother refusing to leave the bedside and the child too ill to move, this humble branch president with his missionary friend retired to a small upper room in the house to pray for the baby’s life. The mother, suspecting just such an act, sent one of the older children to observe and report back.

There in that secluded chamber the two knelt and prayed fervently until, in Brother Pierce’s own words, “we felt that the child would live and knew that our prayers had been heard.” Arising from their knees, they turned slowly only to see the young girl standing in the partially open doorway gazing intently into the room. She seemed, however, quite oblivious to the movements of the two men. She stood entranced for some seconds, her eyes immovable. Then she said, “Papa, who was that . . . man in there?”

Her father said, “That is Brother Pierce. You know him.”

“No,” she said, matter-of-factly, “I mean the other man.”

“There was no other, darling, except Brother Pierce and myself. We were praying for baby.”

“Oh, there was another man,” the child insisted, “for I saw him standing [above] you and Brother Pierce and he was dressed [all] in white.”

Now if God in his heavens will do that for a repentant old cigar-smoking, inactive, swearing pool player, don’t you think he’ll do it for you? He will if your resolve is as deep and permanent as Eli Pierce’s. In this Church we ask for faith, not infallibility. (See *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo Snow*, pp. 407–13.)

*Immerse yourself in the scriptures.* You will find your own experiences described there. You will find spirit and strength there. You will find solutions and counsel. Nephi says, “The words of Christ will tell you all things . . . ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3).

*Pray earnestly and fast with purpose and devotion.* Some difficulties, like devils, come not out “but by prayer and fasting.”

*Serve others.* The heavenly paradox is that only in so doing can you save yourself.

*Be patient.* As Robert Frost said, with many things the only way out is through. Keep moving. Keep trying.

*Have faith.*

*Has the day of miracles ceased?*

*Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved?*

*Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith . . . that angels appear and minister unto men.* [Moroni 7:35–37]

Several decades ago an acquaintance of mine left a small southern Utah town to travel

to the East. He had never traveled much beyond his little hometown and certainly had never ridden a train. But his older sister and brother-in-law needed him under some special circumstances, and his parents agreed to free him from the farm work in order to go. They drove him to Salt Lake City and put him onto the train—new Levi's, not so new boots, very frightened, and eighteen years old.

There was one major problem, and it terrified him. He had to change trains in Chicago. Furthermore, it involved a one-night layover, and that was a fate worse than death. His sister had written, carefully outlining when the incoming train would arrive and how and where and when he was to catch the outgoing line, but he was terrified.

And then his humble, plain, sun-scarred father did something no one in this room should ever forget. He said, "Son, wherever you go in this Church there will always be somebody to stand by you. That's part of what it means to be a Latter-day Saint." And then he stuffed into the pocket of his calico shirt the name of a bishop he had taken the time to identify from sources at Church headquarters. If the boy had troubles, or became discouraged and afraid, he was to call the bishop and ask for help.

Well, the train ride progressed rather uneventfully until the train pulled into Chicago. And even then the young man did pretty well at collecting his luggage and making it to the nearby hotel room that had been prearranged by his brother-in-law. But then the clock began to tick and night began to fall and faith began to fail. Could he find his way back to the station? Could he find the right track and train? What if it was late? What if he was late? What if he lost his ticket? What if his sister had made a mistake and he ended up in New York? What if? What if? What if?

Without those well-worn boots ever hitting the floor, that big, raw-boned boy flew across the room, nearly pulled the telephone out of

the wall, and, fighting back tears and troubles, called the bishop. Alas, the bishop was not home, but the bishop's wife was. She spoke long enough to reassure him that absolutely nothing could go wrong that night. He was, after all, safe in the room, and what he needed more than anything else was a night's rest. Then she said, "If tomorrow morning you are still concerned, follow these directions and you can be with our family and other ward members until train time. We will make sure you get safely on your way." She then carefully spelled out the directions, had him repeat them back, and suggested a time for him to come.

With slightly more peace in his heart, he knelt by his bed in prayer (as he had every night of his eighteen years) and then waited for morning to come. Somewhere in the night the hustle and bustle of Chicago in the 1930s subsided into peaceful sleep.

At the appointed hour the next morning he set out. A long walk, then catch a bus. Then transfer to another. Watch for the stop. Walk a block, change sides of the street, and then one last bus. Count the streets carefully. Two more to go. One more to go. I'm here. Let me out of this bus. It worked, just like she said.

Then his world crumbled, crumbled before his very eyes. He stepped out of the bus onto the longest stretch of shrubbery and grass he had ever seen in his life. She had said something about a park, but he thought a park was a dusty acre in southern Utah with a netless tennis court in one corner. Here he stood looking in vain at the vast expanse of Lincoln Park with not a single friendly face in sight.

There was *no* sign of a bishop or a ward or a meetinghouse. And the bus was gone. It struck him that he had no idea where he was or what combination of connections with who knows what number of buses would be necessary to get him back to the station. Suddenly he felt more alone and overwhelmed than he had at any moment in his life. As the tears welled up in his eyes, he despised himself for feeling so



afraid—but he was, and the tears would not stop. He stepped off the sidewalk away from the bus stop into the edge of the park. He needed some privacy for his tears, as only an eighteen-year-old from Southern Utah could fully appreciate. But as he stepped away from the noise, fighting to control his emotions, he thought he heard something hauntingly familiar in the distance. He moved cautiously in the direction of the sound. First he walked, and then he walked quickly. The sound was stronger and firmer and certainly it was familiar. Then he started to smile, a smile that erupted into an audible laugh, and then he started to run. He wasn't sure that was the most dignified thing for a newcomer to Chicago to do, but this was no time for discretion. He ran, and he ran fast. He ran as fast as those cowboy boots would carry him—over shrubs, through trees, around the edge of a pool.

*Though hard to you this journey may appear,  
Grace shall be as your day.*

The sounds were crystal clear, and he was weeping newer, different tears. For there over a little rise huddled around a few picnic tables and bundles of food were the bishop and his wife and their children and most of the families of that little ward. The date: July 24, 1934. The sound: a slightly off-key a cappella rendition of lines that even a boy from Southern Utah could recognize.

*Gird up your loins; fresh courage take;  
Our God will never us forsake;  
And soon we'll have this tale to tell —  
All is well! All is well!*  
[“Come, Come, Ye Saints,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 30]

It was Pioneer Day. The gathering to which he had been invited was a Twenty-Fourth of July celebration. Knowing that it was about time for the boy to arrive, the ward had thought it a simple matter to sing a verse or two of

“Come, Come, Ye Saints” to let him know their location.

Elisha, with a power known only to the prophets, had counseled the king of Israel on how and where and when to defend against the warring Syrians. The king of Syria, of course, wished to rid his armies of this prophetic problem. So—and I quote:

*Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots,  
and a great host: and they came by night, and  
compassed the city about.*

*. . . an host compassed the city both with horses  
and chariots. [2 Kings 6:14–15]*

If Elisha is looking for a good time to be depressed, this is it. His only ally is the president of the local teachers quorum. It is one prophet and one lad against the world. And the boy is petrified. He sees the enemy everywhere—difficulty and despair and problems and burdens everywhere. The bus is gone and all he can see is Chicago. With faltering faith the boy cries, “Alas, my master! How shall we do?”

And Elisha's reply? “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:15–16).

“They that be with us?” Now just an Israelite minute here. Faith is fine and courage is wonderful, but this is ridiculous, the boy thinks. There *are* no others with them. He can recognize a Syrian army when he sees one, and he knows that one child and an old man are not strong odds against it. But then comes Elisha's promise:

*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than  
they that be with them.*

*And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee,  
open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened  
the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold,  
the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire  
round about Elisha. [2 Kings 6:16–17]*

In the gospel of Jesus Christ you have help from both sides of the veil, and you must never forget that. When disappointment and discouragement strike—and they will—you remember and never forget that if our eyes could be opened we would see horses and chariots of fire as far as the eye can see riding at reckless speed to come to our protection. They will always be there, these armies of heaven, in defense of Abraham's seed.

I close with this promise from heaven.

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;*

*And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. [D&C 78:17–18]*

*I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, . . . and mine angels [shall be] round about you, to bear you up. [D&C 84:88]*

*The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours. [D&C 78:18]*

Oh yes, "We'll find the place which God for us prepared." And on the way "We'll make the air with music ring, Shout praises to our God and King; Above the rest these words we'll tell—All is well! All is well!" ("Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, 1985, no. 30).

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.