

# *The Whole Armor of God*

REX C. REEVE, SR.

I am humbly grateful tonight to have the opportunity to stand before this great audience. I am subdued. The power of the spirit that comes forth from you humbles me. I am aware that without the Lord's help one really can't do anything. I've prayed that he bless me, and I've prayed that he bless you because much of what will happen here tonight will be dependent upon the spirit that comes through you and from you. I've found over the years that, when people come seeking, with their cups up, and the Lord's Spirit works through them, it's much easier to bring the message. So I hope there will be a prayer in your heart that the Lord will help us, that your time will not be wasted.

I am excited tonight to see these wonderful missionaries assembled here. There are about 1,800, President Christensen said. That's about the number that I supervise now in the eastern part of the United States, but I have never had them all together like this. I am aware of the special spirit they have as they are set apart. There are many returned missionaries here too, so it is a humbling experience to be here with you tonight.

## **A Great Day**

I am grateful to have an opportunity to raise my voice as a witness for the Lord Jesus

Christ. This is really a great day to live. It is exciting to know the things the Lord is doing. It is exciting to see him moving to establish his work in the earth. I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, but we're still a very small minority when you realize that there are between four and five billion people in the world, and we have just reached the five million mark, which means that we're one-tenth of one percent of the world's population. The odds would be against us if it were not for the fact that nothing is too hard for the Lord. But because he is there and nothing is too hard for him, with his help we can carry this message to the ends of the earth.

In the presence of you wonderful young people, I am reminded tonight that the Lord is now sending some of the finest spirits that have ever come to earth. As I go about and meet the missionaries and others across the earth, I find that they are superior to the generation that I was born in. I salute you. I would like you to know that we are proud of you.

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*Rex C. Reeve, Sr., was a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this fireside address was given at Brigham Young University on 8 August 1982.*

More than that I hope you feel our love and respect for you. We are grateful that you are here, and we are eager to do all we can to assist you and to help you in this task that the Lord has set before us.

This day we live in is really a great day. It is different from other days. Elias the prophet spoke about the restoration of all things. He meant not only the power and authority of the gospel, but also the restoration of all the evil that has been in the earth. Can you see what a challenge we have as we come now to the wind-up scene? The war in heaven was not won there. All that has been done is to change the location of the battlefield, and it has been transferred down here.

What an honor, what a privilege to you wonderful young people to think that the Lord had confidence enough in you that he would allow you to come in this day! This will be the only time in the history of the Church in the years that the earth has been in existence that it will not have been thrown down or given to another people. The Lord spoke through Daniel and said he would cut a little stone out of the mountain without hands, and it would roll forth until it filled the whole earth. And it would not be thrown down or given to another people (see Daniel 2:31–45). I feel, myself, with the help of the Lord and with those he is sending in this day, that is possible.

So you who are of the first team, you are the elect of God. I address you tonight and say that you have a heavy responsibility upon you. There are many who are counting on you not to fail. The Lord has said, “Of him unto whom much is given much is required” (D&C 82:3). Many have given much that we could be here and have what we have.

### **Our Heritage**

This past week Sister Reeve and I have had the opportunity to spend some days where the Church was organized. We were back at the pageant. We were in the Sacred Grove. You

can't be in that sacred place and not know that something special happened there. The feeling that's there, unless you're totally insensitive to the Spirit, lets you know that you are on holy ground, just as Moses must have felt when he approached the burning bush, when the Lord said to him, “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5).

I am glad that Joseph Smith did not fail. When I study the challenges he had to face, I'm grateful that he had the strength he did and that he had the trust he had in the Lord. How would we have felt about him if he had failed? How would we have felt if the pioneers had failed? I never fly from Salt Lake back across those plains but what I picture those men and women struggling across that 1,100 or 1,200-mile expanse, feet bleeding, short of food, not knowing for sure where they would be the next day, crossing rivers without a bridge. We have had a little taste of it. We know what it is to be in the desert. I have been in some of those areas where you don't have to irrigate. The water comes down automatically, and all you have to do is harvest the crop after you've planted it. I imagine there were those who had second thoughts when they came here where little grows unless you pour the water on it. I'm grateful that they didn't fail. Many noble men and women have made it possible for us to have the blessings we have.

Just three years ago the Prophet of God spoke to the Church and said, “The Church is at a point in its growth and maturity when we are at last ready to move forward in a major way” (“Let Us Move Forward and Upward,” *Ensign*, May 1979, p. 82). All those years before we have been trying to gather enough strength. It took a hundred years to get the first one hundred stakes. Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Lorenzo Snow, Wilford Woodruff, Joseph F. Smith, and for part of the time Heber J. Grant never presided over more than one hundred stakes. In 1930 the hundredth stake

was organized. During the time since President Kimball became the Prophet on 30 December 1973 and now, in 1982, there have been more than 722 stakes organized—in less than nine years. There were 630 when he became the Prophet.

### **The Adversary's Power**

Can you just get a feel now that the kingdom is beginning to move out across the earth? When the kingdom of God begins to increase in power and strength and to move forth, the power of the adversary also increases. He is not asleep. I've learned that there is one good thing that I can say about him. He is not lazy. He works day and night, and he is always there. It is interesting, as some of the new temples are being placed, to see the attention that we are getting from some of his helpers. You can be aware that something important is happening there because of the attention we are getting from the opposition.

In this day, if we are going to do our part, we need to live better, we need to be closer to the Lord, we need to be more diligent than any group has ever been, confronted, as we are, with the fact that all the evil is being restored. When we talk about the restoration of the fullness of the gospel, we talk about a plan that made it possible for Enoch to establish a Zion, a place in which the scripture indicates, "They were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18). "And it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom" (Moses 7:69). That same plan and those same principles are here, and we must prepare ourselves so we can be a celestial people because Zion can be set up only on the principles of the celestial kingdom; otherwise, the Lord cannot receive her unto himself.

The same evils that were there when the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah are being restored. To live in this day we need to

put the Lord first in our lives. We need to live so that we have his power.

### **The Power of the Holy Ghost**

Have you ever wondered what makes The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints different from other churches? There are many Christian churches. Why are we unique? What is it that we have? Joseph Smith answered that question for President Martin Van Buren as he waited on him at one time asking for redress for the losses that the Saints had suffered. Martin Van Buren, the president, said to him, "What makes your church different from the other churches?"

The Prophet's answer was, "We have the Holy Ghost."

I don't know whether or not you know what a marvelous blessing it is to have the Holy Ghost, but it makes it possible for a person to be born spiritually so as to be actually back in the presence of God through the Holy Ghost. As I see the struggle today, I see the adversary making great efforts to cut us off from the Holy Ghost, to remove us from this power that puts us in communication with the Lord, to isolate us so that he can destroy us. He gets us to do things so that our power is gone.

You see, a missionary out in the field without the Spirit is as helpless as a soldier with a gun without any ammunition. When converts are made, it is only when spirit speaks to spirit. You can talk people into the Church, but if you talk them in, they can be talked out or they will fall out. The real conversion comes when spirit speaks to spirit, when they have this marvelous witness from the Holy Ghost that the gospel is true.

### **Personal Experiences**

I've been on both sides of the fence. I can remember a time when I believed but did not know for myself. I'm a five-generation Latter-day Saint. Most of our people have been in the Church since the days of Joseph Smith. Every

one of my ancestors and Sister Reeve’s ancestors crossed the plains as pioneers. The Lord has blessed us abundantly, and I’ve been aware that I have had many blessings—that I’m riding on a ticket that someone else paid for. It has kept me mighty humble.

This force that can cut us off can also keep us from knowing. Because I was raised in a Latter-day Saint home, we prayed; Dad and Mother prayed. Dad was in the bishopric all the years I can remember as a child. I can remember going away to school. I grew up in Millard County. We lived there during the Depression, and it was hard. I determined that I did not want to be there anymore. You’d work all year. You’d get up at 5:00 in the morning and work until 9:00 at night, and, when the season was over, you owed more than you did when you began in the spring. I had worked all summer. I had been paid a dollar a day. I had saved every cent I had earned. That is different from what we do today. I hadn’t spent one cent. I wanted to go to school. I had \$96.35.

Before I went away, I came to the bishop. I said, “Bishop, tomorrow I’m going away to school. I’ve worked all summer. I’ve saved all that I’ve earned. I have \$96.35. Do you think that the Lord expects me to pay tithing on that when I need so much more to go to school and there’s no other place to get any?”

This great bishop, and I’ll be grateful to him forever, looked me right in the eye and said, “If you pay your tithing, you’ll have what you need when you need it.”

I went home and got the money, those nine dollars. I carried them down, and they got bigger as I got closer to his office, until when I got to the desk they were almost as big as wheels. The greatest trial I had had up to that point was to put them on his desk. I still have the receipt in my safety deposit box.

I went away to school. I rode in the back of a grain truck to get there. One of the first things that happened to me was that I sat in a class where a learned man said, “God is dead.” I

was shaken up. I was depending on Him. The bishop said He was going to help me. This learned man said that thinking people, anyone with intellect, would know that God is dead. We didn’t have a telephone at home. I couldn’t call Dad and Mother to be reassured. I hadn’t met the new bishop yet. The pillars that held my house up had fallen down, and I needed to know. I can still remember that night when there was no place to go but to my knees. There alone in that little one-room apartment, I kneeled down. I prayed—no fancy words—something like this, “Father in Heaven, Dad and Mom have been praying to you all these years. This learned man says you’re dead. I need to know. Are you there?” When I went back to that man’s class, I knew something he didn’t know. I knew there was a God, and He wasn’t dead. I knew that He could hear, and I knew that He could answer. From that hour until now, that assurance has been like an anchor to my soul.

#### **You Can Know**

If you haven’t a witness so that you know, I hope that you will make the effort to learn for yourself. The Lord has provided a sure means in the sacred record which came forth from the Hill Cumorah. As I stood in the Grandin Building where the Book of Mormon was printed just the other day—they have now made it a visitors’ center—actually the very place the book was printed—I got a confirmation again that this is the record the Lord brought forth. It is the only book that has a promise that I know of in the world. The Lord has given the promise that, if you really want to know and if you have a sincere heart and ask with real intent, having faith in Christ, he’ll reveal the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost. “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moroni 10:5). If you don’t have that witness, I encourage you to work until you have it. It will change your life. It will bring meaning and

purpose to the things you do. It will change your goals; it will give you direction; it will bring joy, peace, and satisfaction that cannot be had in any other way. It will bring a satisfaction; it will be like an anchor to you in these days when the world is confused.

### **To Cut Us Off**

Let me talk a moment now about the Holy Ghost and what I feel the adversary is trying to do to cut us off from this witness that makes it so we can know. The Holy Ghost can dwell only in a clean tabernacle. There is an eternal law that this Being and his influence cannot dwell in an impure tabernacle. Our bodies are tabernacles, and if anything in them is impure—and the delicate memory banks in our minds are part of our bodies, and can become stained or defiled—they resist that Spirit, and it will be restrained from flowing to us. Can you see maybe a reason why the adversary is flooding the world with all the material that is out across the land? In the nations where Sister Reeve and I traveled, we did not see one that was not afflicted with this plague. Across the whole earth what's printed on the pages, what's in the magazines, what's in some of the music? You can't go to a show really any more unless you want to have those images and thoughts come into your mind.

I turn to the Doctrine and Covenants, section 63, and I would like to read what the Lord says about having the Spirit and what can happen if we allow some things into our minds.

*And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, or if any shall commit adultery in their hearts, they shall not have the Spirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear. [D&C 63:16]*

Now the words *shall not* don't mean *maybe*, they mean *definitely*; the verse is talking about the Holy Ghost and only about our thoughts—

no action. Can you see then why the adversary is making such an effort to cut us off from the power we have to set up the kingdom of God in the earth, to have communication, to have our own revelation from the Lord, to have our own guidance? I hope that each one of us might guard our minds and not allow anything in them that will defile our bodies so that we can be pure, clean, and holy so that the Spirit can radiate from us.

A scripture says, "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). This door to your mind can be controlled only by you and by the Lord. Your parents can't control it. Your bishop can't control it. The Lord can, but he won't because he has given you agency. So you alone determine what you allow to come into your conscious mind to be stored there as in a computer to be brought out whenever the Spirit touches you.

### **The Means by Which We Can Protect Ourselves**

What a challenge then to live in this day! If we are going to be filled with the Spirit, we need to guard what comes into our minds. The Lord has given us the means by which we can protect ourselves in this evil day. He has talked about putting on an armor to protect us against a foe we do not see with our eyes or hear with our ears ordinarily, but he still has such marvelous power that he can keep us from the presence of the Lord, from having the full power of the Holy Ghost. I'd like to read to you from the Doctrine and Covenants what the lord says to do to put this protective power upon you.

*Wherefore, lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins, and take upon you my whole armor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to stand.*

*Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth. [D&C 27:15–16]*

What does that mean? How do you do that? What are the loins? Scripturally, the loins represent the power the Lord has given his children to initiate new life. The loin is that part of the body between the short ribs and the hip bone. The Lord says to gird with truth the use of this power to initiate new life. “And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24).

Now if you gird something, what do you do? If I were going to gird my wrist, I would wrap something around it to strengthen it. For instance, I gird my wrist with this handkerchief. If I wrap it around my wrist tightly, it will strengthen my wrist. The Lord says to gird your loins with truth. To me that would mean to understand how sacred this power is, and the conditions or guidelines under which it is to be used. So, it would be protected and strengthened and you will not be caught in the web that Lucifer is spreading across the whole earth.

In the next verse the Lord says, “Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” The word *girt* means “moored, such as a vessel, held taut by two cables, so as not to swing to the wind or the tide.” To have your loins girt about with truth means that you would have them so securely bound by your understanding and your commitment to yourself that the temptations that roll over the earth and the pressures that come on from peer groups would not be able to move you and carry you away. Isn’t it interesting that the Lord has placed that first in the armor?

I don’t know whether you can really understand all this talk about armor. But if you could have been with Sister Reeve and me at Warwick Castle in England, you could have seen many suits of armor sitting there that people wore long ago. They were to protect them against arrows, stones, axes, swords, and spears. In our day the Lord is talking about an armor that will protect us against an unseen foe.

The Lord goes on to explain the next piece of armor to put on: “Having on the breastplate of righteousness” (D&C 27:16). Now the breastplate would be the part that covers your chest that protects your heart and your lungs. You couldn’t live very long without a heart. If an arrow went through your heart, you’d have to stop fighting. If you got one through an arm, you probably could go on and fight with the other arm, but the heart is a vital part.

Tonight we have Dr. Russell Nelson here. He is a great heart surgeon. I am so grateful to him. If it hadn’t been for his skill and the help of the Lord, Sister Reeve wouldn’t be here tonight. I’m grateful to him because he extended her life by his skill and his know-how in open-heart surgery.

The Lord has asked us to cover these vital parts so that they will not be injured. How does one put on the breastplate of righteousness? To me this part of the armor comes from keeping the commandments. Obedience to the Lord’s commandments brings forth great blessings. Let’s take one of the commandments—the Word of Wisdom, for instance. The Lord has given us the commandment. He said in preface to it,

*In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forwarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation.*  
[D&C 89:4]

And he gives us the Word of Wisdom saying, “Don’t use alcohol, don’t use cigarettes, don’t drink tea or coffee,” and I would add today, “Don’t use drugs.” They can destroy you, and not the least thing they’ll do is cut you off from the Holy Ghost. Having made a covenant with the Lord to keep these commandments, if you knowingly violate the trust the Lord has placed in you, you will be cut off from the Spirit. Someone might say to you that one cigarette won’t hurt you. But I want to tell you what it

will do. If you have gone into the waters of baptism and promised the Lord that you would keep his commandments, if you knowingly violate that promise, the Holy Ghost cannot stay in a disobedient tabernacle. The real loss comes when you sever yourself from the full flow of the Spirit of the Lord. Gradually you will lose the light until you will be in darkness.

Let me tell you the story of one young man and his experience with the Word of Wisdom. As a young man about nineteen years old, after the funeral of his father, he and his mother and his sister made an agreement that they would never break the Word of Wisdom unless they were all three together and decided it was all right to do it.

He went away to the University of Pennsylvania to learn to become a dentist. He was now in his fourth year at the university, and he was the captain of the track team of this great university. The team went to Boston to compete in the national track meet at Harvard University.

The night before the big meet, while he was in his hotel room getting ready to retire, the track coach came and said, "Tomorrow is a great day for me and the school. I have always dreamed of having a national championship team. I want every member of the team to be in top shape. I have brought a bottle of special wine to tone up your system, and I want you to forget your funny Mormon ideas and have some so you'll be in top shape tomorrow."

"Coach, I just can't do it. I respect and admire you, but I have made a solemn promise to my sister and my mother and my God, and I just can't do it." The coach was disappointed as he went away.

The next morning there was an anxious knock on his door. His name was called out, and he answered, "What's the matter?"

The coach asked, "Are you all right?" He said, "Yes, I'm all right."

"Thank goodness. Every other member of the team is sick."

This young man went out as the lone representative of the university track team. He ran the 100-yard and 220-yard dashes. He had just run in a qualifying heat on the 220-yard dash, and ordinarily there is a field event in between the track events to allow the runners to rest and get their breath. On this occasion all the field events had been completed, and, because of the restless crowd, they announced the finals in the 220-yard dash. He was tired and needed a few minutes to rest. He protested to the officials, but they did not delay it.

As he lined up for the race, he said, that tired feeling left him, and that day he set a new world's record for the 220-yard dash on a curved track.

The Lord has given us a marvelous promise with that commandment. He said,

*And all saints who remember to keep and do these sayings, walking in obedience to the commandments, shall receive health in their naval and marrow to their bones;*

*And shall find wisdom and great treasures of knowledge, even hidden treasures;*

*And shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint.*

*And I, the Lord, give unto them a promise, that the destroying angel shall pass by them, as the children of Israel, and not slay them. [D&C 89:18–21]*

The Lord didn't fail him, and he won't fail you.

I can remember an occasion when I had pressure on me, a young bishop away in a distant city. They have what they call a social hour, and they determined I was going to join them. I couldn't do that and be the bishop. Yet the two of them stood by the door and said, "Okay, you're going to join us or you're not going out of here." I said a little prayer, "Father in Heaven, help me." I walked right between them and they didn't see me go, just as if the Lord had put a plastic bag over me, and I slipped right out. To this day not one of them has asked where I went.

The Lord never fails. All the other commandments—tithing, keeping the Sabbath day holy, all the commandments—they form this protective power. When you walk with the Lord, you walk in safety and protection.

Let's move on now to the next one. He says, "Having . . . your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (D&C 27:16). How do you do that? Our bodies are marvelous things. They have been organized in such a way that, when we do an action a number of times, it becomes a habit, and almost without conscious effort habits will automatically work for us. We set our own habit patterns.

For instance, if we have established the habit of prayer, it will be easier for us to pray than not to pray. We can have habits automatically work for us instead of against us. And they become a powerful source of protection. If we have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, that would mean that we had been keeping the commandments and the habits are working for us.

Let's go on to the next piece of armor: "Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (D&C 27:17). A shield is something which usually goes on your left forearm with which you can protect yourself from objects the enemy sends at you. In the days of the knights it could have been a protection against rocks, arrows, swords, or spears.

This part of the spiritual armor is faith in the Lord. It is an assurance which comes from your knowledge and understanding of the word of the Lord. You can hear the word of the Lord when you read the scriptures. You can hear the word of the Lord when you hear his prophets. You can feel the word of the Lord when you pray. You can build faith.

Let me relate a story of a young man who built a shield of faith. From the record of the Old Testament we learn of David, herding his father's sheep. He talked about a time when his confidence and trust in the Lord had reached a

point that, when he tried to protect the sheep and a bear and a lion attacked him, the Lord delivered him out of the paw of the bear and the paw of the lion. The day came when his father, Jesse, asked him to leave the sheep to take some food down to his three older brothers who were fighting in Saul's army. He took some loaves, cheese, and parched corn and went down to his brothers. When he arrived he saw this giant of a Philistine challenging the armies of Israel, saying, "If one of you will come out and contend with me and he wins, we will be your servants; but if I win, you will be our servants."

Not one man in Saul's army dared answer his challenge. David was offended because Goliath had defied the God of Israel. David said he would go and fight this ungodly Philistine. Can you picture a young lad of maybe seventeen walking down to meet this giant, probably ten feet tall, with a spear that probably weighed more than David and a shield big enough to require a shield carrier?

When Goliath saw the unarmed youth coming to meet him, he was insulted and said:

*Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? . . .  
 . . . Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto  
 the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field.*  
 [1 Samuel 17:43–44]

David replied,

*I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the  
 God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied.*

*This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine  
 hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a  
 God in Israel."* [1 Samuel 17:45–46]

At the proper moment David placed a smooth stone in his sling, and with practiced aim he let it go. That day Goliath had something enter his head which had not been there before, and he toppled and fell to the earth.



David had built a shield of faith that was a protection to him.

As we pray and search the holy scriptures and serve and obey, we, too, can build a shield of faith to protect us from the adversary. You have to obey the things you read. It is not enough to read and hear them. The Lord said,

*I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise.*  
[D&C 82:10]

Next the Lord says, “And take the helmet of salvation” (D&C 27:18). The helmet is to protect the head. In a football game a player who did not wear his helmet would probably only last two plays.

The helmet of salvation to me is to know who we are and why we are here and where we can go and what we can do and be.

*I am a child of God,  
And he has sent me here,  
Has given me an earthly home  
With parents kind and dear.  
Lead me, guide me, walk beside me,  
Help me find the way.  
Teach me all that I must do  
To live with him someday.*  
[Naomi W. Randall, “I Am a Child of God,”  
*Sing With Me*, no. B-76]

When a person knows who he is and why he is here, he has a real advantage.

And now for the final piece of armor, the Lord says, “Take . . . the sword of my Spirit” (D&C 27:18). Sometimes our sword may not be very big, but there can be great power in it. The Lord said,

*Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men.* [D&C 11:21]

From the Book of Mormon we read of Alma and the sons of Mosiah, as they met at a transfer time from their areas of service in the mission field:

*And what added more to his joy, they were still his brethren in the Lord; yea, and they had waxed strong in the knowledge of the truth; for they were men of a sound understanding and they had searched the scriptures diligently, that they might know the word of God.*

*But this is not all; they had given themselves to much prayer, and fasting; therefore they had the spirit of prophecy, and the spirit of revelation, and when they taught, they taught with power and authority of God.* [Alma 17:2–3]

Can you see what a marvelous thing it is if we are prepared, if we have the Spirit, if we are obedient, if we do our part? We can carry the burden the Lord has asked us to carry. It isn't easy. If it were easy, he wouldn't have sent you special young men and women here to do it. He has prepared you and held you back, trained you, made it possible for you to come in this day. I hope there won't be one of you who will fail the Lord. I hope that you will be true to this trust, that you will put on this whole armor that your may stand in these challenging days.

### **The Lord Loves Us**

I'd like to give you a little more feeling for the Lord, this great Being we serve. I don't know how close your relationship is to him, but you know he will be as close to you as you'll let him be by how you feel and how you act.

Sister Reeve and I had the marvelous experience of a brief visit in the Holy Land, and we prepared ourselves. We searched every word we could find that was written about the Savior. We went through the Gospels. We didn't want to miss anything. I had been hearing President Lee talk about how he felt when he stood at the

garden tomb. I had heard President Kimball talk about the feelings he had when he was on shepherd's hill. I wanted to feel those same feelings. We had the privilege to walk where Jesus walked. We had the opportunity to come out of the room where they had the last Supper, down off the Mount of Olives, across the brook Cedron, into the area they call the Garden of Gethsemane. In my mind's eye I could picture this lone figure out there about a stone's throw away from three apostles whom he had left at the gate to watch. As I looked I could see him suffering. I could see him prostrate on the ground, and I began to feel a kinship with him and felt like saying, "Why is he doing that? Why does he suffer like that? He didn't need to do it himself." This truth came into my mind: "He's doing it for you." When I realized that part of that suffering was because of me and my transgressions, I began to have new feeling and new love, greater gratitude for the Son of God.

When he described his suffering, he said,

*Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink. [D&C 19:18]*

Yes, new feelings of love and gratitude for him came into my heart as I realized that he had suffered so extensively, and he had done it for me. Then the soldiers came, 600 of them. The scriptures say they bound him. Can you imagine the Son of God being led like a common criminal down to be judged in an illegal trial at night? As he stood there in Annas's palace, they smote him on the face. He said, "Why smitest thou me?"

They reviled him, blindfolded him, struck him again, and said, "If you are the Son of God, why don't you prophesy who smote you?"

They took him before Caiaphas, and there they determined that he should die. Caiaphas couldn't take his life. They had to send him before Pilate. Four times Pilate tried to turn him loose. He couldn't find anything wrong in him. He said, "I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:38). Still they clamored for his crucifixion. So finally—and maybe it was his one last attempt to save Him—he sent Him down to be scourged. It doesn't say so in the scripture, but I had in my mind that maybe he thought that, if he sent Him down to be scourged, and He came forth beaten and bruised and bleeding, it might soften their hearts and they might let Him go.

Sister Reeve and I stood in a chamber where they scourged people. It almost makes your blood run cold to see what they did. Hands were tied above their heads to the ceiling, legs were tied so the victim couldn't fall down, and then clothing was taken from the back, and then 39 strokes were administered across the back. They had little reservoirs to hold the salt water used to restrain the bleeding if it became too profuse as they administered the scourging. I envisioned in my mind this suffering that the Son of God had, then to have them take him and mockingly put a purple robe on him and then lead him away up a little path they call Via Dolorosa up to where they say he was crucified. As I stood there, in my mind's eye I could almost see and hear the nails being driven into his hands. This great Being had no ill feeling in him. I thought, "What would I have done had I been there?" I would have fought back, and I would have failed. I am grateful he was so brave and marvelous and didn't fail. The last terrible hour, when he had to be left alone, was probably his greatest test. The Father withdrew his Spirit because Jesus had to do it himself.

I'm grateful that Heavenly Father didn't stop it. If he had stopped it and left us without rendering the service he rendered, we would never have had a body again. Our body would

have gone to the grave never to rise. Our spirit would have been subject to Lucifer. No matter what we did, we would have been subject to him forever. I am so grateful for the strength of this great Being who is the Son of God. In godly dignity he gave up his life. They did not take it from him. After all this intense suffering, which was sufficient to cause him to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46), he reported his accomplishment: "Father, it is finished. Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (see Luke 23:46, JST Matt. 27:54).

### Testimony

I testify to you today that he lives, that he is real, that he guides this church. There is no question. You can hear him speaking through President Kimball. You not only can hear him; you can feel him. You can see it in the Prophet's face. There was no question about it in the last conference—this great prophet, five foot six, standing there with hardly enough strength to stand up, just saying two or three sentences:

*The work is divine, the Lord is at the helm, the Church is true, and all is well. ["The Lord Is at the Helm," Ensign, May 1982, p. 76]*

There wasn't anyone in that congregation that didn't know that the Lord had spoken through this great man in those few words.

Isn't it great to live in this day when the heavens are opened, when there is there is guidance? Wouldn't it be tragic now if we fail in our part? We have a vital part; we have the opportunity to send this message across the earth. There are millions of people waiting for the gospel, and, if we fail, unless the Lord sends someone else to replace us, they will lose the blessings. I hope and pray that we won't fail the Lord in these trying times, we won't be caught in Lucifer's net, we won't be caught in his snare, that we will keep ourselves clean,

sweet, pure, and obedient so the power of the Holy Ghost can work in us.

What a marvelous thing it is when your mind's turned completely to the Lord. The Lord said to sanctify ourselves. When he comes first in our lives, he becomes a moving, motivating power. I testify to you that he lives. I'd like you to know that there is no hesitation, there is no doubt. I know with every fiber of my being, every cell in my body. I know that God lives. I know that he guides this work. I know that he is alive. I know you can talk with him; I know that he hears. I know that he loves us. I know that he is there. He is as close as we will let him be. May God bless you and bless us all that we may not fail. If I had one wish, I'd wish I could be as young as you are. When you begin to see the years slip by, you are anxious to do all you can. I hope that all of you might put your energy in and move forth with new vigor, new energy, that we might follow the guidance of the Prophet when he has said, "Lengthen your stride, hasten your step, increase your efficiency, do just a little more."

May God bless you and be with you in the days ahead. I pray that you will have a desire to draw close to him so that this people will stand out, that we'll be the people that Isaiah saw when he said,

*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*

*And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. [Isaiah 2:2-3]*

We are in that day. May God bless us that we won't fail. That those who are watching us from behind the scenes will be pleased with what they see, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord. Amen.