

Guidance of the Holy Spirit

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This is a tremendous audience—they tell me that between thirteen thousand and fourteen thousand people are here.

I hope that you will join me in a prayer that while I speak to you I will have the influence of the Spirit with me—and that you will, too, so that the time will not be wasted. We particularly need it because I have chosen to speak to you about the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As a prelude to what I shall say, I quote a statement made some time ago by Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in which he said:

I do not wish to conceal . . . my profound concern about the situation which now prevails in the world, a concern which I know to be shared by responsible people everywhere. There is an almost universal sense of apprehension about where the tumultuous developments of our time may take us, a sense of deep anxiety at phenomena which we do not fully understand, let alone control. In all the speculation, much of it depressing, about the shape of the future, there recurs a note of helplessness and fatalism which I find deeply disturbing. This is not a new phenomenon. Dire prophecies have often before been the symptoms of periods of transition and change in human society. What is new is the scope and scale of the problems that give rise to these apprehensions. . . .

. . . Today the civilization that is facing such a challenge is not just one small part of mankind—it is mankind as a whole. [Kurt Waldheim, address to United Nations General Assembly, August 30, 1974; emphasis added]

I assume, without elaborating, that we can all agree that we are living in a day of confusion and bewilderment. As conditions worsen, it becomes more apparent every day that we are on a collision course with disaster. I am persuaded that nothing short of the guidance of the Holy Spirit can bring us through safely. I call attention to our unpleasant situation not because I want you to see and clearly recognize the predicament of the world in which we live.

Personally I am not disheartened. I am concerned, but I do not live in terror. It has been said that the late President J. Golden Kimball once attended a stake conference session in which the speaker who preceded him occupied nearly all the time with a scorching call to repentance and that when Brother J. Golden

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followed him, he simply said, “Well, brothers and sisters, I suppose the best thing for all of us to do is to go home and commit suicide.”

Serious as are our times, however, I do not recommend Brother Golden’s prescribed course, because I have an unwavering confidence that if we will heed and follow the guidance of His Holy Spirit, the Lord can and will preserve and bring us through safely.

Our arrival at the brink upon which we now are poised is no surprise to the Lord. He saw disaster coming and provided the way of escape. As long ago as November 1, 1831, He said:

I the Lord, knowing the calamity which should come upon the inhabitants of the earth, called upon my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., and spake unto him from heaven, and gave him commandments;

And also gave commandments to others, that they should proclaim these things unto the world. [D&C 1:17–18]

He had prefaced this statement by explaining the reason for the coming calamity as follows:

They [referring to the inhabitants of the earth] seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish. [D&C 1:16]

Now the means of escape provided in the commandments, which the Lord had given to Joseph Smith, directing him and “others” to proclaim them unto the world, is “the guidance of the Spirit.” In the commandments, the Lord teaches specifically and emphatically that such guidance is a reality and is available to every person, and that if followed it would lead to a solution of all our problems—individual, national, and international. That the enjoyment

of it is the birthright of every soul is made plain in the following statements found in the 84th section of the Doctrine and Covenants:

The Spirit [says the Lord] giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father.

And the Father teacheth him of the covenant [that is, the gospel of Jesus Christ] which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world. [D&C 84:46–48; emphasis added]

This tremendous truth—that every soul is enlightened by the spirit of Christ and endowed with the ability to respond to its guidance—is perfectly understandable when we remember that mortals are, by inheritance, spirits. They are the natural-born spirit children of God. It is, therefore, natural that there persists in every human soul, from antemortal spirit life, the capacity to instinctively respond to the promptings of the Spirit.

The truth that “every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God” is often repeated in the scriptures. In the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants it is stated this way;

Thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. [D&C 93:1–2]

On the other hand, those who reject the guidance of the Spirit and in rebellion yield to the temptations of the evil one become carnal,

sensual, and devilish, and move in the opposite direction. Lehi put it this way:

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great mediation of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself. [2 Nephi 2:27]

The importance of obtaining and following the guidance of the Spirit cannot be overemphasized, for it is the issue which separates the righteous from the wicked.

Whoso cometh not unto me [says the Lord] is under the bondage of sin. . . .

And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groaneth under sin and darkness even now. [D&C 84: 51, 53]

This doctrine is repeated in the scriptures over and over again. For example, in the 93rd section of the Doctrine and Covenants it is written that “every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation” (D&C 93:32).

Jesus told Nicodemus that

God sent . . . his Son into the world . . . that the world through him might be saved.

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. [John 3:17–21]

These teachings clearly establish the fact that the spiritual guidance received by each individual is strictly up to that individual. Each is enlightened by the spirit when he comes into the world, given his free agency, and held responsible for the exercise thereof.

There seems to be no middle ground. When men reject the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they are left to their own wisdom and to the promptings of evil spirits. As Jesus taught the Nephites, they may “have joy in their works for a season, [but] by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return” (3 Nephi 27:11). History, the scriptures, and daily experience all confirm this truth. The uninspired wisdom of men will never solve our difficulties.

The time is short; a world calamity can be avoided only if enough people can be brought to humble themselves and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The revelations of the Lord are explicit as to what will occur if this fails. Among other things, the Lord says that

a desolating scourge shall go forth among the inhabitants of the earth, and shall continue to be poured out from time to time, if they repent not, until the earth is empty, and the inhabitants thereof are consumed away and utterly destroyed by the brightness of my coming.

Behold, I tell you these things, even as I also told the people of the destruction of Jerusalem; and my word shall be verified at this time as it hath hitherto been verified. [D&C 5:19–20]

Whether the world will take the way of escape is not, however, the determining factor for us. We must do all we can to offer the revealed means of escape to them and with all our power entreat them to embrace it. But for our own selves we must take the stand Joshua

took when he said to Israel: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

The Holy Spirit brings peace to all who follow it. As surely as it brings lasting peace to a whole people, as it did to the people of Enoch and the Nephites during their “golden era,” so it brings peace to one righteous man though he stand alone in a world of wickedness.

Paul, awaiting martyrdom in a prison cell, could write to his beloved Timothy:

I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

[2 Timothy 4:6–8]

Mormon, leading a rebellious, hardened, calloused people with whom the Spirit of the Lord had ceased to strive, wrote this to his son Moroni:

And now, my beloved son, notwithstanding their hardness [he was talking about the hardness of the spirits of the Lamanites and Nephites], let us labor diligently; for if we should cease to labor, we should be brought under condemnation; for we have a labor to perform whilst in this tabernacle of clay, that we may conquer the enemy of all righteousness and rest our souls in the kingdom of God. [Moroni 9:6]

The Prophet Joseph on his way to Carthage could say: “Do not be alarmed, brethren, for they [a company of armed militia] cannot do more to you than the enemies of truth did to the ancient Saints—they can only kill the body.” A little later he added: “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter, but I am as calm as a

summer’s morning. I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men.” (Joseph Smith, History of the Church 6:554–55.)

There is no way to discourage or defeat a people or a person who follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They who do so discover the meaning of the Savior’s words: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27.)

In the 9th section of the Doctrine and Covenants is recorded a test by which one may be assured that he has the guidance of the Spirit. I recommend that we make the use of it a continuing practice.

“You must study it out in your mind,” said the Lord to Oliver Cowdery, with respect to the translation from the gold plates. “Then you must ask me if it be right [if you have made the right decision], and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right” (D&C 9:8). Every person can put that formula to the test and learn for himself the rightness or wrongness of his decisions.

Remember that “the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world” (D&C 84:46). Every man is born with the light of Christ in his soul, and it is only when he chooses to reject that light which would guide him through the world that he becomes carnal and sensual and devilish. All of the scriptures agree on this point. Not only do I want you to remember that “the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world,” but remember also that “the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit,” and that “every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father” (D&C 84:46–47). Remember also that the Lord has said:

It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;

And that I am the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

If you want to obtain and keep the guidance of the Spirit, you can do so by following this simple four-point program.

First: *Pray.* Pray diligently. Pray with each other. Pray in public in the proper places, but never forget the counsel of the Savior: “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:6).

Learn to talk to the Lord; call upon his name in great faith and confidence.

Second: *Study and learn the gospel.*

Third: *Live righteously;* repent of your sins by confessing them and forsaking them. Then conform to the teachings of the gospel.

Fourth: *Give service in the Church.*

If you will do these things, you will get the guidance of the Holy Spirit and you will go through this world successfully, regardless of what the people of the world say or do.

In conclusion, I want to quote a few statements from the revelation from which our text, “Guidance of the Holy Spirit,” was taken. The first part of this revelation is a persuasive plea by the Lord to His people to come unto Him while there is yet time. Much of the rest of the revelation is a restatement by the Lord of what He said to His disciples concerning the signs of His coming in the day when He shall come in glory in the clouds of heaven. He gave these statements to the apostles in reply to their question as to the signs of His second coming. And in this revelation He restated them to the Prophet Joseph Smith. As one of the signs, “a light shall break forth among them that sit in

darkness, and it shall be the fullness of my gospel.” Now that light has broken forth; we know that—and that is one sign of the approach of the coming of Christ.

“But they receive it not;” said the Lord, “for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.” (D&C 45:28–29.)

Another sign is that there should be “wars and rumors of wars, . . . the whole earth [should] be in commotion.” As a consequence of an

overflowing scourge . . . a desolating sickness shall cover the land.

. . . Among the wicked, men shall lift up their voice and curse God and die.

. . . There shall be earthquakes also in divers place, and many desolations; yet men will harden their hearts against me, and they will take up the sword, one against another, and they will kill one another. . . .

And it shall come to pass that he that feareth me shall be looking for the great day of the Lord to come, even for the signs of the coming of the Son of Man.

. . . And, behold, I will come; and they shall see me in the clouds of heaven, clothed with power and great glory; with all the holy angels; and he that watches not for me shall be cut off. . . .

Then shall the arm of the Lord fall upon the nations. . . .

And calamity shall cover the mocker, and the scorner shall be consumed; and they that have watched for iniquity shall be hewn down and cast into the fire. . . .

And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.

[And this is the text:] *For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into fire, but shall abide the day.*

And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation.

For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver. [D&C 45:26, 31–33, 39, 44, 47, 50, 56–59; emphasis added]

You see, to be earnest in what we do is not enough: We have to take the Holy Spirit for our guide and not be deceived.

God bless us, my young brothers and sisters, that we may have the good sense to take the Holy Spirit as our guide and thereby accomplish the purpose and obtain the reward for which this life was given to us. This I humbly pray, and leave my blessings with you, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.