

LESSON 43

“Take upon You My Whole Armor”

OVERVIEW:

Put on the whole armor of God. Live the law of chastity. Be honest. Use language that reverences God and is edifying.

Ephesians 6: 11 Put on the whole ^aarmour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 For we ^awrestle not ^bagainst ^cflesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ^drulers of the ^edarkness of this world, against spiritual ^fwickedness in high *places*. (The war in heaven is still going on, it's just moved to earth. “Being spiritual enemies, they must be fought with spiritual weapons.” Rodney Turner, Studies in Scriptures, 6:121)

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God (the armor used is both offensive and defensive), that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your **loins** (“Now the loins in that part of the body between the lower rib and the hip in which you will recognize are the vital organs which have to do with reproduction...he was saying that that part of the body was one of the most vulnerable.” Harold B. Lee, Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, Speeches of the Year, 1954, p. 2-7) ^agirt about with ^btruth (“Truth, the Lord said, is knowledge of things as they are, things as they were and things as they are to come...What is going to guide us along the path of proper morals or proper choices? It will be the knowledge of truth.” Ibid. Scriptures and living prophets.), and having on the ^cbreastplate (“...over the heart...the heart has always been used to typify our conduct.” Ibid.) of ^drighteousness; (Having learned truth we have a measure by which we can judge between right and wrong and so our conduct will always be gauged by that thing which we know to be true.” Ibid.)

15 And your **feet** (“suggesting the feet as the objectives, the goals of life which we should have guarded by some kind of armour and protected from getting off on the wrong foot.” Ibid.) **shod with the preparation of the gospel of ^apeace**; (“How fortunate are you if in your childhood in the home of your father and mother you were taught the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ, the Son of the Living God; the meaning of baptism and what you gain by the having the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Fortunate is the child who has been taught to pray and who has been given those steps to take on through life.” Ibid.)

16 Above all, taking the **shield of ^afaith**, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery ^bdarts of the wicked.

17 And take the **helmet** (“...our head, our thoughts.” Ibid.) of ^asalvation (“Saved from death and saved from sin. When these two things are missing from this earth and when it has been sanctified and cleansed of its impurity, this shall be the place of salvation.” Ibid.), and the **sword of the Spirit** (“...which is the word of God. I can't think of any more powerful weapons than faith a knowledge of the scriptures in the which are contained the Word of God.” Ibid), which is the word of God: (In our day, it is clear that the "armor of God" is more than just a figure of speech. Elder Carlos E. Asay teaches that the armor of God is a token of the promise of eternal life: "There is, however, another piece of armor worthy of our consideration. It is the special underclothing known as the temple garment, or garment of the holy priesthood, worn by members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who have received their temple endowment. This garment, worn day and night, serves three important purposes: it is a reminder of the sacred covenants made with the Lord in His holy house, a protective covering for the body, and a symbol of the modesty of dress and living that should characterize the lives of all the humble followers of Christ. The white garment symbolizes purity and helps assure modesty, respect for the attributes of God, and, to the degree it is honored, a token of what Paul regarded as taking upon one the whole armor of God. Garments bear several simple marks of orientation toward the gospel principles

of obedience, truth, life, and discipleship in Christ. The real battles of life in our modern day will be won by those who are clad in a spiritual armor—an armor consisting of faith in God, faith in self, faith in one's cause, and faith in one's leaders. The piece of armor called the temple garment not only provides the comfort and warmth of a cloth covering, it also strengthens the wearer to resist temptation, fend off evil influences, and stand firmly for the right." Asay, Carlos E. "The Temple Garment: 'An Outward Expression of an Inward Commitment,' " *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 19.)

18 ^aPraying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all ^bperseverance and supplication for all saints;

SCRIPTURES:

Put on the whole armor of God

The War in Heaven, is now being waged here on earth:

D&C 76: 25 And this we saw also, and bear record, that an ^aangel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, (To that which had been revealed, this text adds the knowledge that Satan had been "in authority" in our premortal estate, meaning that an organization of some kind existed in which he held a position of considerable importance. Of this the inspired poetic version states: And I saw and bear record of warfare in heav'n; For an angel of light, in authority great, Rebell'd against Jesus and sought for his pow'r, But was thrust down to woe from his Godified state. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 522) who ^brebelled against the Only Begotten ^cSon whom the Father ^dloved and who was in the bosom of the Father, was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son,

26 And was called ^aPerdition, (To be called perdition means one is hopelessly and irredeemably lost. It is to be so given up to wickedness and so filled with hatred of the gospel cause and of the Father and the Son that even the Atonement cannot extend the hope of salvation. Of those who come to the point of perdition, the Prophet said, "You cannot save such persons; you cannot bring them to repentance; they make open war, like the devil, and awful is the consequence" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 358; D&C 132:27-28). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 522-23) for the heavens ^bwept over him—he was ^cLucifer, (Lucifer means "the Shining One" or torch bearer.) a son of the morning.

27 And we beheld, and lo, he is ^afallen! is fallen, even a son of the morning! (George Q. Cannon: Some have called him *the* son of the morning, but here it is *a* son of the morning—one among many, doubtless. This angel was a mighty personage, without doubt. The record that is given to us concerning him clearly shows that he occupied a very high position; that he was thought a great deal of, and that he was mighty in his sphere, so much so that when the matter was debated concerning the earth and the plan of salvation, he was of sufficient importance to have a plan, which he proposed as the plan by which this earth should be peopled and the inhabitants thereof redeemed. His plan, however, was not accepted; but it was so plausible and so attractive that out of the whole hosts of heaven one-third accepted his plan and were willing to cast their lot with him. [Moses 4:14; D&C 29:36-37.] Now, the difference between Jesus and Lucifer was this: Jesus was willing to submit to the Father. He had His plan, which was accepted. Everything that has come down to us, coupled with our own experience in relation to the effect of the Spirit of God upon the heart, leads us to the conclusion that if Jesus had proposed a plan that would not have been accepted by the Father, He would not have rebelled against the Father nor against the Son of God, who might have proposed the plan which was accepted. (MS, September 5, 1895, 57:563-64.))

28 And while we were yet in the Spirit, the Lord commanded us that we should write the vision; for we beheld Satan, that old ^aserpent, even the ^bdevil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the

kingdom of our ^cGod and his Christ—

29 Wherefore, he maketh ^awar with the saints of God (Satan's war started in the pre-mortal life and has continued in mortality.), and encompasseth them round about. (Joseph Smith: There are three independent principles—the spirit of God, the spirit of man, and the spirit of the devil. All men have power to resist the devil. They who have tabernacles have power over those who have not. TPJS, p. 189-90. George Q. Cannon: The Lord our God has sent us here to get experience in these things, so that we may know the good from the evil, and be able to close our hearts against the evil. "But," says one, "I have not power to do that. It takes possession of me and I have not power to resist it." Another says, "I am assailed by doubts and by unbelief, and I cannot help it." Now, this is not so. It is true that some have greater power of resistance than others, but everyone has the power to close his heart against doubt, against darkness, against unbelief, against depression, against anger, against hatred, against jealousy, against malice, against envy. God has given this power unto all of us, and we can gain still greater power by calling upon Him for that which we lack. If it were not so, how could we be condemned for giving way to wrong influences? There could be no condemnation for our doing what we could not help; but we can help doing these things. We can help yielding to wrong influences, and being quarrelsome and selfish. We can help giving way to the spirit of theft, and we can resist the spirit of lust. God has given us power to resist these things, that our hearts may be kept free from them, and also from doubt; and when Satan comes and assails us, it is our privilege to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for I have no lot nor portion in you, and you have no part in me. I am in the service of God, and I am going to serve Him, and you can do what you please. It is no use you presenting yourself with your blandishments to me. You come and try to insinuate into my heart evil thoughts about the servants of God or about the work of God, and I will not listen to you; I will close my heart against you." Whenever darkness fills our minds, we may know that we are not possessed of the Spirit of God, and we must get rid of it. When we are filled with the Spirit of God we are filled with joy, with peace, and with happiness, no matter what our circumstances may be; for it is a spirit of cheerfulness and of happiness. Gospel Truth 1:19-20))

Moses 4: 3 Wherefore, because that ^aSatan ^brebelled against me, and sought to destroy the ^cagency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be ^dcast down; (God didn't reject Satan's proposal because it wasn't His plan, but because Satan's plan would not work to save mankind.) 4 And he became ^aSatan, yea, even the ^bdevil, the father of all ^clies, to ^ddeceive and to blind men, and to lead them ^ecaptive at his will, even as many as would not ^fhearken unto my voice.

D&C 27: 15 Wherefore, ^alift up your hearts and ^brejoice, and ^cgird up your loins, and take upon you my whole ^darmor, that ye may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, that ye may be able to ^estand. (Since Satan wants to keep us from attending this sacrament meeting, the Lord here is telling us how to arm ourselves against Satan to remain worthy of attending this solemn and sacred meeting.)

16 Stand, therefore, having your loins ^agirt about with ^btruth, having on the ^cbreastplate of ^drighteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the ^egospel of ^fpeace, which I have sent mine ^gangels to commit unto you;

17 Taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the ^afiery darts of the wicked;

18 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my ^aSpirit, (Francis M. Lyman: By observance of the laws of the Lord we are led in the straight and narrow way, and the Holy Spirit alone can keep us there. We have power to so live that the Spirit of the Lord may dwell with us. We cannot be Latter-day Saints without the Spirit of the Lord; and should not try to live without it. Do not try to speak without the Spirit of the Lord; do not try to build up the kingdom of God without the direction of his Spirit. If we endeavor to do these things by our own wisdom we will be sure to go astray and make mistakes. It is the office and calling of the Spirit of the Lord to dwell with you always; to be in your homes, with your families; in your neighborhoods, and in your business affairs, on the Sabbath day and throughout the

week, and every day in the year, if you do right. (CR, April 1904, p. 13.)) which I will pour out upon you, and my word which I reveal unto you, and be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me (There is a strength in unified prayer that is not found otherwise. This a great example for husband and wife to be unified in their lives together.), and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be ^bcaught up, that where I am ye shall be ^calso. Amen. (We now come to the "key" or the specific counsel that if followed faithfully will permit us to "stand" as Joseph Smith did and not "fall" as Sidney Rigdon did. All of us who want to be faithful and stand against the enemies of truth and right should internalize vv. 15-18 of section 27 and also study Eph. 6:10-18 in the New Testament.¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be ^astrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole ^aarmour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we ^awrestle not ^bagainst ^cflesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ^drulers of the ^edarkness of this world, against spiritual ^fwickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins ^agirt about with ^btruth, and having on the ^cbreastplate of ^drighteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of ^apeace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of ^afaith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery ^bdarts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of ^asalvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 ^aPraying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all ^bperseverance and supplication for all saints; We may all stand faithfully and overcome the things of this world, and be saved at the Lord's coming and partake of the Sacrament with him, if we will put on God's whole armor, and keep it on. No one can escape the battle; Satan makes war upon each servant of the Lord. To stand successfully and come off conqueror, we must wear the armor of the Lord. The six parts of the spiritual armor that we are to wear are enumerated. The first part of the armor mentioned is the girdle of armor that goes about the loins, the armor of truth. An ancient soldier wore a girdle of physical armor about his loins to protect vital parts of his body. A servant of the Lord wears the spiritual armor of "truth" to protect his virtue. Elder Harold B. Lee wrote: "Truth is to be the substance of which the girdle about your loins is to be formed if your virtue and vital strength is to be safeguarded." The next part of the armor mentioned is the "breastplate of righteousness." One of the beatitudes says: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). We cannot build Zion without being pure in heart; to be pure in heart we must keep impurities out. That is done by wearing the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness means meeting the standards of that which is morally right and just. The Saints are next admonished to have their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Again, Elder Lee, commenting upon this part of God's armor, said: "Your feet, which are to represent your goals or objectives in life, are to be shod. Shod with what? With the preparation of the gospel of peace. . . . He [Apostle Paul] knew that preparedness is the way to victory and that 'eternal vigilance is the price of safety.' Fear is the penalty of unpreparedness and aimless dawdling with opportunity." The Latter-day Saint who would ward off Satan's fiery darts (flaming arrows) takes the shield of faith. When persecution, heartbreak, temptation, disappointment, illness, etc., come into the life of a Latter-day Saint, the first thing he should do is get behind the shield of faith. He must let the Lord help him; if he does not, then Satan's fiery darts may wound him spiritually. Some have sustained so many wounds that their recovery is lengthy, and there are some who have never recovered. That which is to protect our mind, our ability to think properly, is the "helmet of salvation." Wilford Woodruff said that Oliver Cowdery at one time had a powerful testimony, but he "yielded to the temptation of the evil one." Oliver began to think that he was smarter than Joseph Smith and wanted to direct the prophet; thus Oliver apostatized. We are all grateful to Oliver Cowdery for the great contributions he made to the Church. It is tragic that he did not keep the helmet of salvation in place. His thinking deviated from the truth first, and soon his actions followed. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is another part of the armor which we are to wear. The Lord never intended that his servants, his soldiers, fight only a defensive battle. He desires that we be on the offensive and help overcome evil, free mankind from the terrible effects of evil, and prepare the earth for the return of the Savior. The sword is primarily an

offensive weapon. We are to take the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Thus we are to study the scriptures, listen to the voices of the living prophets, and have the companionship of the Holy Ghost as we move forward in God's service. One who wears God's whole armor is happy and confident in the battle against evil. One who does not is devastated by the struggle. We must wear the armor always throughout life, keep it polished through service, and keep it in good repair through repentance. Leon Hartshorn, *Studies in Scripture*, 1:128-130.)

(When the Lord says to put on his whole armor, He means *whole armor*. Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin: In these latter days when keeping the commandments of God is unimportant to many, you young men have a greater challenge to honor the priesthood than any who have held it at any other time. This is true because Lucifer is on the prowl. He knows that his days are numbered. He has learned how to destroy people, especially the youth. He seeks to find any chink in the armor of each person. He knows our weaknesses and knows how to exploit them if we allow him to do so. We can defend ourselves against his attacks and deceptions only by understanding the commandments and by fortifying ourselves each day through praying, studying the scriptures, and following the counsel of the Lord's anointed. CR, Oct 1988, p. 44)

Live the law of chastity

D&C 42: 22 Thou shalt ^alove thy wife with all thy heart, and shalt ^bcleave unto her and none else. (President Spencer W. Kimball explained: "The words none else eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse" (Miracle of Forgiveness, 250). There are those married people who permit their eyes to wander and their hearts to become vagrant, who think it is not improper to flirt a little, to share their hearts, and have desire for someone other than the wife or the husband, the Lord says in no uncertain terms: [Sec. 42:22, quoted.] D&C 42 22And, when the Lord says all thy heart, it allows for no sharing nor dividing nor depriving. And, to the woman it is paraphrased: "Thou shalt love thy husband with all thy heart and shalt cleave unto him and none else." The words none else eliminate everyone and everything. The spouse then becomes pre-eminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. We sometimes find women who absorb and hover over the children at the expense of the husband, sometimes even estranging them from him. The Lord says to them: ". . . Thou shalt cleave unto him and none else." (IE, December 1962, 65:928.)) 23 And he that ^alooketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the ^bSpirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out. (David O. McKay: "Tell me what you think about when you do not have to think, and I will tell you what you are." Temptation does not come to those who have not thought of it before. Keep your thoughts clean, and it will be easy to resist temptations as they come. (John A. Widtsoe, *Gospel Interpretations*, 1953, p. 401.)) 24 Thou shalt not commit ^aadultery; and he that committeth ^badultery, and repenteth not, shall be ^ccast out.

D&C 59: 6 Thou shalt ^alove thy ^bneighbor as thyself. Thou shalt not ^csteal; neither commit ^dadultery, nor ^ekill, nor do anything ^flike unto it. (What is "like unto" murder? Abortion. When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he told them that they could eat of the fruit of all the trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of that tree he said, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Genesis 3:3). Sin is born in the touching stage. We court or flirt with sin before we commit ourselves to it. For instance, we may seek the exact demarcation or definition of a sin so that we can push up as close to it as possible, thinking that we can touch without tasting. This becomes particularly dangerous in sexual transgression, where sins are often simulated with the idea that no offense has been

given to the Spirit. This simply is not the case. Toying with sin, simulating sin, and defining sin in such a manner that one can effectually touch it while still feigning innocence are each sins which can be as harmful, or in some instances even more harmful, than the sin itself. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 431)

D&C 63:16 And verily I say unto you, as I have said before, he that ^alooketh on a woman to ^blust after her, or if any shall commit ^cadultery in their hearts, they shall not have the ^dSpirit, but shall deny the faith and shall fear. ("Those who are guilty and do not repent in a short time become fault-finders, criticizing their brethren, then the principles of the Gospel, and finally become bitter in their souls against the work and those who are engaged in it. The most bitter opponents of the Church and the Gospel many times have been proved to be immoral and leading unclean lives" (Smith, Church History and Modern Revelation, 1:230).)

(The Lord's law of moral conduct is abstinence outside of lawful marriage and fidelity within marriage. Sexual relations are proper only between husband and wife appropriately expressed within the bonds of marriage. Any other sexual contact, including fornication, adultery, and homosexual and lesbian behavior, is sinful. First Presidency letter, 14 Nov 1991)

(Elder Richard G. Scott: Any sexual intimacy outside of the bonds of marriage—I mean any intentional contact with the sacred, private parts of another's body, with or without clothing—is a sin and is forbidden by God. It is also a transgression to intentionally stimulate these emotions within your own body. 11 Satan tempts one to believe that there are allowable levels of physical contact between consenting individuals who seek the powerful stimulation of emotions they produce, and if kept within bounds, no harm will result. As a witness of Jesus Christ, I testify that is absolutely false. Satan particularly seeks to tempt one who has lived a pure, clean life to experiment through magazines, videocassettes, or movies with powerful images of a woman's body. He wants to stimulate appetite to cause experimentation that quickly results in intimacies and defilement. Powerful habits are formed which are difficult to break. Mental and emotional scars result. CR, Oct 1994, p. 51)

Consequences of immorality:

(Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin: One of the most pervasive deceptions in recent years is the notion that immorality is normal and acceptable and has no negative consequences. In truth, immorality is the underlying cause of much suffering and many other problems that are prevalent today, including rampant disease, abortion, broken families, families without fathers, and mothers who themselves are children. President Ezra Taft Benson said, "The plaguing sin of this generation is sexual immorality." 10 The Lord said, "Thou shalt not ... commit adultery, ... nor do anything like unto it." 11 That means we are to avoid abnormal sexual behavior, including fornication, homosexual behavior, child molestation, or any other perversion of God's plan of happiness. CR, Oct 1994, p. 100)

The blessings of chastity:

D&C 121: 45 Let thy ^abowels also be full of charity towards all men, (Joseph Fielding Smith: Considering the fact that at the time this epistle was written [Section 121] the Prophet and his fellow prisoners were suffering intensely and unjustly at the hands of their enemies the nobleness and greatness of his character stands out most clearly. When we consider that he could write in the spirit of forgiveness, charity and humility, such as we find in this great document, we know surely the Spirit of the Lord was upon him. I repeat, that this is one of the great letters ever written. This we discover when we take the time to analyze it. Not all of this communication has been placed in the Doctrine and

Covenants as revelation. It does appear in full in the Documentary History, Vol. 3, pages 289-305. The closing paragraphs of Section 121 are wonderfully inspiring and contain a beauty of sentiment and promise that should rejoice the heart of every Latter-day Saint: [Sec. 121:45-46, quoted.] (CHMR, 1949, 3:199-200.)) and to the household of faith, and let ^bvirtue garnish (to prepare, to equip, to protect, or to arm) thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy ^cconfidence wax strong in the ^dpresence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood (Bruce R. McConkie: "What then is the doctrine of the priesthood? And how shall we live as the servants of the Lord? This doctrine is that God our Father is a glorified, a perfected, and an exalted being who has all might, all power, and all dominion, who knows all things and is infinite in all his attributes, and who lives in the family unit. It is that our Eternal Father enjoys this high status of glory and perfection and power because his faith is perfect and his priesthood is unlimited. It is that priesthood is the very name of the power of God, and that if we are to become like him, we must receive and exercise his priesthood or power as he exercises it. It is that he has given us an endowment of heavenly power here on earth, which is after the order of his Son and which, because it is the power of God, is of necessity without beginning of days or end of years. It is that we can enter an order of the priesthood named the new and everlasting covenant of marriage (see D&C 131:2), named also the patriarchal order, because of which order we can create for ourselves eternal family units of our own, patterned after the family of God our Heavenly Father. It is that we have power, by faith, to govern and control all things, both temporally and spiritual; to work miracles and perfect lives; to stand in the presence of God and be like him because we have gained his faith, his perfections and his power, or in other words the fulness of his priesthood. This, then, is the doctrine of the priesthood, than which there neither is nor can be anything greater. This is the power we can gain through faith and righteousness. Truly, there is power in the priesthood—power to do all things! If the world itself was created by the power of the priesthood, surely that same power can move mountains and control the elements. If one-third of the hosts of heaven were cast down to earth by the power of the priesthood, surely that same power can put at defiance the armies of nations or stay the fall of atomic bombs. If all men shall be raised from mortality to immortality by the power of the priesthood, surely that same power can cure the diseased and the dying and raise the dead. Truly there is power in the priesthood—a power which we seek to acquire to us, a power which we devoutly pray may rest upon us and upon our posterity forever" (Conference Report, April 1982, 50.)) shall distil upon thy soul as the ^edews from heaven.

46 The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant ^acompanion, (Heber C. Kimball: The Holy Ghost in the people of God will control not only our domestic animals, our families, our servants, and our handmaids, but it will control the armies of men that are in the world, the mountains, seas, streams of water, tempests, famines and pestilence and every destructive power, that they come not nigh unto us, just as much as we can keep sickness from us by the power of faith and prayer and good works. If we live our religion, we shall never suffer as the world suffers. We shall not be perplexed with famine and pestilence, with the caterpillar, and other destructive insects which the Lord will send in the last days to afflict the wicked. (JD, October 7, 1859, 7:330.)) and thy scepter (A scepter is a staff or rod, which, like a throne or a crown, is a symbol of kingship and its accompanying authority and power. In this text we are told that the authority and power of the Melchizedek Priesthood centers in the principles of "righteousness and truth." The word righteousness literally means "to move in a straight line," it is to be "up right," and "virtuous." Truth, as used here, carries the idea of conformity to correct principles or doctrines. Thus, the authority and power of the priesthood centers in the "up right" or "virtuous" application of eternal principles or the light of heaven. This meaning is captured in the name Melchizedek, by which the priesthood is known. It naturally follows that the priesthood of God will never be found conscribing agency. All that is done in the Church and kingdom of God must represent free will and be accomplished by "persuasion, by long- suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned" (v. 41). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 957) an unchanging scepter of ^brighteousness and truth; and thy ^cdominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever. (Rudger Clawson: How extremely sacred is the Holy Priesthood, which is nothing

more nor less than divine authority committed unto man. . . . "Whoso," (meaning any man and every man), "is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling," [Sec. 84:33] will enter into the possession of all things, for he will become a joint heir with Jesus Christ, the Lord, in such possession. Now, I ask you, what more could a faithful high priest receive than the promise of this blessing? Could he receive any more if he were an apostle? Could he receive any more if he were a counselor in the Presidency of the Church? Could he receive any more if he were the President of the Church, than a promise which gives to him a joint heirship in all things? No, he could not. And so it is with the faithful seventy, and so with the faithful elder in the Church. There is no need for envy. There is no need for overweening ambition. There is no need to reach out and try to grasp that to which we are not entitled. The essential thing is that every man should see to it, that he obtains the High Priesthood. If he advances no further than the office of an elder but is faithful in the magnifying of his calling, he will enter into his glory and exaltation and will receive the fulness of which the record speaks. (CR, October 1917, pp. 28-29.)

(First Presidency: Heber J. Grant, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., David O. McKay: How glorious is he who lives the chaste life. He walks unfeared in the full glare of the noon-day sun, for he is without moral infirmity. He can be reached by no shafts of base calumny, for his armor is without flaw. His virtue cannot be challenged by any just accuser, for he lives above reproach. His cheek is never blotched with shame for he is without hidden sin. He is honored and respected by all mankind, for he is beyond their censure. He is loved by the Lord, for he stands without blemish. The exaltations of eternities await his coming. (CR, October 1942, pp. 10-12.))

Temptations will occur:

(President Gordon B. Hinckley: I plead with you boys tonight to keep yourselves free from the stains of the world. You must not indulge in sleazy talk at school. You must not tell sultry jokes. You must not fool around with the Internet to find pornographic material. You must not dial a long-distance telephone number to listen to filth. You must not rent videos with pornography of any kind. This salacious stuff simply is not for you. Stay away from pornography as you would avoid a serious disease. It is as destructive. It can become habitual, and those who indulge in it get so they cannot leave it alone. It is addictive. It is a five-billion-dollar business for those who produce it. They make it as titillating and attractive as they know how. It seduces and destroys its victims. It is everywhere. It is all about us. I plead with you young men not to get involved in its use. You simply cannot afford to. CR, Apr 1998, p. 66-67)

Be honest

One of the questions to get a temple recommend says: "Are you honest in your dealings with your fellowman?"

D&C 42: 21 Thou shalt not ^alie; he that lieth and will not repent shall be cast out.

D&C 51: 9 And let every man deal ^ahonestly, and be alike among this people, and receive alike, that ye may be ^bone, even as I have commanded you.

D&C 97: 8 Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are ^ahonest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are ^bwilling to observe their covenants by ^csacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are ^daccepted of me.

Use language that reverences God and is edifying

D&C 63: 60 Behold, I am ^aAlpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. 61 Wherefore, let all men ^abeware how they take my ^bname in their lips—62 For behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not ^aauthority.

D&C 136: 21 ^aKeep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain, for I am the Lord your God, even the ^bGod of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

Pornography

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Last summer Sister Oaks and I returned from two years in the Philippines. We loved our service there, and we loved returning home. When we have been away, we see our surroundings in a new light, with increased appreciation and sometimes with new concerns.

We were concerned to see the inroads pornography had made in the United States while we were away. For many years our Church leaders have warned against the dangers of images and words intended to arouse sexual desires. Now the corrupting influence of pornography, produced and disseminated for commercial gain, is sweeping over our society like an avalanche of evil.

At our last conference, President Gordon B. Hinckley devoted an entire talk to this subject, warning in the plainest terms that “this is a very serious problem even among us” (“A Tragic Evil among Us,” *Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 61). Most of the bishops we meet in stake conferences now report major concerns with this problem.

My fellow holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, and also our young men, I wish to speak to you today about pornography. I know that many of you are exposed to this and that many of you are being stained by it.

In concentrating my talk on this subject I feel like the prophet Jacob, who told the men of his day that it grieved him to speak so boldly in front of their sensitive wives and children. But notwithstanding the difficulty of the task, he said he had to speak to the men about this subject because God had commanded him (see **Jacob 2:7–11**). I do so for the same reason.

In the second chapter of the book that bears his name, Jacob condemns men for their “whoredoms” (**Jacob 2:23, 28**). He told them they had “broken the hearts of [their] tender wives, and lost the confidence of [their] children, because of [their] bad examples before them” (**Jacob 2:35**).

What were these grossly wicked “whoredoms”? No doubt some men were already guilty of evil acts. But the main focus of Jacob’s great sermon was not with evil acts *completed*, but with evil acts *contemplated*.

Jacob began his sermon by telling the men that “as yet, [they had] been obedient unto the word of the Lord” (**Jacob 2:4**). However, he then told them he knew their thoughts, that they were “beginning to labor in sin, which sin appeareth very abominable ... unto God” (**Jacob 2:5**). “I must testify unto you

concerning the wickedness of your hearts” (**Jacob 2:6**), he added. Jacob was speaking as Jesus spoke when He said, “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (**Matt. 5:28**; see also **3 Ne. 12:28**; **D&C 59:6**; **D&C 63:16**).

More than 30 years ago, I urged BYU students to avoid the “promotional literature of illicit sexual relations” in what they read and viewed. I gave this analogy:

“Pornographic or erotic stories and pictures are worse than filthy or polluted food. The body has defenses to rid itself of unwholesome food. With a few fatal exceptions, bad food will only make you sick but do no permanent harm. In contrast, a person who feasts upon filthy stories or pornographic or erotic pictures and literature records them in this marvelous retrieval system we call a brain. The brain won’t vomit back filth. Once recorded, it will always remain subject to recall, flashing its perverted images across your mind and drawing you away from the wholesome things in life.” 1

Here, brethren, I must tell you that our bishops and our professional counselors are seeing an increasing number of men involved with pornography, and many of those are active members. Some involved in pornography apparently minimize its seriousness and continue to exercise the priesthood of God because they think no one will know of their involvement. But the user knows, brethren, and so does the Lord.

Some have suggested that pornography should be a separate question in the temple recommend interview. It is already. At least five different questions should elicit a confession and discussion on this subject if the person being interviewed has the spiritual sensitivity and honesty we expect of those who worship in the house of the Lord.

One of the Savior’s most memorable teachings applies to men who are secretly viewing pornography:

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

“Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (**Matt. 23:25–26**; see also **Alma 60:23**).

The Savior continues His denunciation of those who treat what is visible but neglect to cleanse the inner man:

“Ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

“Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (**Matt. 23:27–28**).

The immediate spiritual consequences of such hypocrisy are devastating. Those who seek out and use pornography forfeit the power of their priesthood. The Lord declares: “When we undertake to cover our sins, . . . behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man” (**D&C 121:37**).

Patrons of pornography also lose the companionship of the Spirit. Pornography produces fantasies that destroy spirituality. “To be carnally minded is death”—spiritual death (**Rom. 8:6**; see also **2 Ne. 9:39**).

The scriptures repeatedly teach that the Spirit of the Lord will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. When we worthily partake of the sacrament, we are promised that we will “always have his Spirit to be with [us].” To qualify for that promise we covenant that we will “always remember him” (**D&C 20:77**). Those who seek out and use pornography for sexual stimulation obviously violate that covenant. They also violate a sacred covenant to refrain from unholy and impure practices. They cannot have the Spirit of the Lord to be with them. All such need to heed the Apostle Peter’s plea: “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (**Acts 8:22**).

Brethren, you have noticed that I am not discussing the effects of pornography on mental health or criminal behavior. I am discussing its effects on spirituality—on our ability to have the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and our capacity to exercise the power of the priesthood.

Pornography also inflicts mortal wounds on our most precious personal relationships. In his talk to men of the priesthood last October, President Hinckley quoted the letter of a woman who asked him to warn Church members that pornography “has the effect of damaging hearts and souls to their very depths, strangling the life out of relationships” (*Liahona* and *Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 60).

At a recent stake conference a woman handed me a similar letter. Her husband had also served in important Church callings for many years while addicted to pornography. She told of great difficulty in getting priesthood leaders to take this problem of pornography seriously: “I got all kinds of responses—like I was overreacting or it was my fault. The bishop we have now has been great. And now after 15 years my husband is trying to deal with his addiction, but now it is 15 years harder to quit for him and the loss has been incalculable.”

Pornography impairs one’s ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others.

Pornography is also addictive. It impairs decision-making capacities and it “hooks” its users, drawing them back obsessively for more and more. A man who had been addicted to pornography and to hard drugs wrote me this comparison: “In my eyes cocaine doesn’t hold a candle to this. I have done both. ... Quitting even the hardest drugs was nothing compared to [trying to quit pornography]” (letter of Mar. 20, 2005).

Some seek to justify their indulgence by arguing that they are only viewing “soft,” not “hard,” porn. A wise bishop called this refusing to see evil as evil. He quoted men seeking to justify their viewing choices by comparisons such as “not as bad as” or “only one bad scene.” But the test of what is evil is not its degree but its effect. When persons entertain evil thoughts long enough for the Spirit to withdraw, they lose their spiritual protection and they are subject to the power and direction of the evil one. When they use Internet or other pornography for what this bishop described as “arousal on demand” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005), they are deeply soiled by sin.

King Benjamin’s great sermon describes the terrible consequences. When we withdraw from the Spirit of the Lord, we become an enemy to righteousness, we have a lively sense of our guilt, and we “shrink from the presence of the Lord” (see **Mosiah 2:36–38**). “Mercy hath no claim on that man,” he concluded; “therefore his final doom is to endure a never-ending torment” (**Mosiah 2:39**).

Consider the tragic example of King David. Though a spiritual giant in Israel, he allowed himself to look upon something he should not have viewed (see **2 Sam. 11**). Tempted by what he saw, he violated two of the Ten Commandments, beginning with “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (**Ex. 20:14**). In this way a prophet-king fell from his exaltation (see **D&C 132:39**).

But the good news is that no one needs to follow the evil, downward descent to torment. Everyone caught on that terrible escalator has the key to reverse his course. He can escape. Through repentance he can be clean.

Alma the Younger described it:

“Yea, I did remember all my sins and iniquities, for which I was tormented with the pains of hell. ...

“... The very thought of coming into the presence of my God did rack my soul with inexpressible horror. ...

“And it came to pass that as I was thus racked with torment, while I was harrowed up by the memory of my many sins, behold, I remembered also to have heard my father prophesy unto the people concerning the coming of one Jesus Christ, a Son of God, to atone for the sins of the world.

“Now, as my mind caught hold upon this thought, I cried within my heart: O Jesus, thou Son of God, have mercy on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death.

“And now, behold, when I thought this, I could remember my pains no more; yea, I was harrowed up by the memory of my sins no more.

“And oh, what joy, and what marvelous light I did behold; yea, my soul was filled with joy as exceeding as was my pain!” (**Alma 36:13–14, 17–20**).

My brethren who are caught in this addiction or troubled by this temptation, there is a way.

First, acknowledge the evil. Don’t defend it or try to justify yourself. For at least a quarter century our leaders have pleaded with men, and also with women and children, to avoid this evil. 2 Our current Church magazines are full of warnings, information, and helps on this subject—with more than a score of articles published or to be published this year and last year alone. 3

Second, seek the help of the Lord and His servants. Hear and heed President Hinckley’s words:

“Plead with the Lord out of the depths of your soul that He will remove from you the addiction which enslaves you. And may you have the courage to seek the loving guidance of your bishop and, if necessary, the counsel of caring professionals” (*Liahona and Ensign*, Nov. 2004, 62).

Third, do all that you can to avoid pornography. If you ever find yourself in its presence—which can happen to anyone in the world in which we live—follow the example of Joseph of Egypt. When temptation caught him in her grip, he left temptation and “got him out” (**Gen. 39:12**).

Don’t accommodate any degree of temptation. Prevent sin and avoid having to deal with its inevitable destruction. So, turn it off! Look away! Avoid it at all costs. Direct your thoughts in wholesome paths.

Remember your covenants and be faithful in temple attendance. The wise bishop I quoted earlier reported that “an endowed priesthood bearer’s fall into pornography *never* occurs during periods of regular worship in the temple; it happens when he has become casual in his temple worship” (letter of Mar. 13, 2005).

We must also act to protect those we love. Parents install alarms to warn if their household is threatened by smoke or carbon monoxide. We should also install protections against spiritual threats, protections like filters on Internet connections and locating access so others can see what is being viewed. And we should build the spiritual strength of our families by loving relationships, family prayer, and scripture study.

Finally, do not patronize pornography. Do not use your purchasing power to support moral degradation. And young women, please understand that if you dress immodestly, you are magnifying this problem by becoming pornography to some of the men who see you.

Please heed these warnings. Let us all improve our personal behavior and redouble our efforts to protect our loved ones and our environment from the onslaught of pornography that threatens our spirituality, our marriages, and our children.

I testify that this is what we should do to enjoy the blessings of Him whom we worship. I testify of Jesus Christ, the Light and Life of the World, whose Church this is, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. CR
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