

“TAKE UPON YOU MY WHOLE ARMOR”

D&C LESSON 43

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INTRODUCTION: I have in my files a Gary Larson cartoon showing a man lying in bed having a dream. In the dream knights clothed in iron armor and wielding iron swords and engaged in fierce combat. But this man—the man who is dreaming—is also in the battle, holding a wooden sword, a garbage can lid rather than a shield, and dressed in his . . . birthday suit. The caption for the cartoon is: COMMON MEDIEVAL NIGHTMARE.

Well, it would be a nightmare to be involved in a battle of life or death without the protection of appropriate armor, both for medieval knights, and for us.

I have another picture clipped from Time magazine showing a man dressed in full armor. Arrows are bouncing off him on every side, and he is standing in a pile of spent arrows that come to his waist. I am certain that the heap of arrows surrounding him is typical of Lucifer’s efforts against us. But if we are not clothed completely in the *armor of God*, the fiery darts of the adversary will penetrate our defenses and we will be wounded often. We may even be fatally wounded. I remember the story of the attack of Ahab and his army against the forces of Syria. Ahab took every precaution to avoid being injured, even disguising himself so that the Syrians would not recognize him and focus on his destruction. The only thing he forgot was to wear enough armor.

But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel
between the sections of his armor. (2K22:34, *NIV*)

1. PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD.

Like Ahab and the medieval warrior in his nightmare, we are at war. D&C 76:29 tells us that Satan “maketh war with the saints of God and encompasseth them round about.” (D&C 76:29)

In Revelation 12 and 13, John had a vision of a woman, a child, and a great red dragon. We are told in 12:7, JST, that the woman is the church. 12:17, JST tells us

that “the dragon [Satan] was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

The point is that we too are at war, with a being of malignant power and bitter hatred who wants to devour us, to destroy us, to make us miserable. What a tragedy it would be if we went into battle like the Lamanites, who “were naked, save it were a skin which was girded about their loins . . .” Alma 43:20; see also 43:19)

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, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you;

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

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of my Spirit, 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, and be faithful until I come, and ye shall be caught up, that where I am ye shall be also. Amen. (D&C 27:15-18)

Both here in the D&C and in Ephesians 6:13-17 where this message is repeated, the Lord specifies that we take up the “whole armor.” A section or two will not suffice. Almost all the armor will not do. We must take the whole armor in order to withstand the evil of our day. Read through the following story. It may enhance your awareness of the importance of this matter.

“Take Upon You My Whole Armor”

By Thaya Eggleston Gilmore

One summer some time after my divorce, I felt my children and I were sinking under the weight of many challenges. I was working as well as attending school full-time, and I studied late into the night after caring

for my children. It was a struggle for me just to provide food and clothes and maintain the house and yard, but on top of that my five children, who at the time ranged in age from 9 to 18, seemed to have major problems of their own that required extra help and patience.

Early one Saturday evening, I retired to my bedroom with heavy feet and a bitter heart. I felt abandoned and alone, with no help or insight to give me hope that things could soon improve.

I lay on my back and rested my arm over my eyes to block out the light. Silently praying for relief from the bottomless black pit we seemed to be falling into, I felt impressed to grab hold of the rod of God's word by turning to the scriptures (see 1 Ne. 15:23–24).

In response to the prompting, however, I said out loud, "There is nothing in the scriptures that can help me with my problems in this day and age."

When I felt the impression again stronger than before, I begrudgingly sat up and took the scriptures from my night table. I opened the pages at random to section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants and began reading the first verse: "Listen to the voice of Jesus Christ, your Lord, your God, and your Redeemer, whose word is quick and powerful."

These words got my attention; I was being directly told to listen to the words of the Lord. Quickly scanning the rest of the section, however, I didn't see anything else that seemed to apply to my dilemma. I was about to turn to something else when I came to verse 15. As I read it, a warm feeling went from my head to my toes, the hair on my neck tingled, and my eyes filled with tears. "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."

This was my answer! By allowing despair to overcome me, I was not exercising my faith to clothe myself or my children in the whole spiritual armor of God.

Just as a knight clothes himself in armor before a joust, I recognized

that I needed to wear the armor of God to protect me in my spiritual battles with temptation and adversity (see D&C 27:16–18).

I contemplated being covered head to foot with that armored protection. With the guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ and his Spirit, I was better able to focus my faith and battle with feelings of bitterness and despair or other fiery darts that assailed my spirit. Even today, I continue to find reassurance that we are not left alone to withstand the adversary. Through praying, finding guidance and answers for our day in the scriptures, striving to live the principles of the gospel, and putting our faith and trust in God and his Son, we can put on the whole armor of God and endure to the end with strength and power. (Thaya Eggleston Gilmore, “Take Upon You My Whole Armor,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1998, p. 62)

The lesson focuses this week on three areas in which gaps in the sections in our armor may be particularly difficult: chastity, honesty, and language.

2. LIVE THE LAW OF CHASTITY.

The Lord has not left us in doubt about his will in the matter of chastity. From the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to the penetrating declarations of our own prophetic leaders, we have been taught clearly what his will is in this matter. We have been warned against any expression of sexual relations outside the bonds of marriage.

Jacob taught powerful lessons about the awful consequences of this kind of sin. He spent some time with his people, “warning them against fornication and lasciviousness, and every kind of sin, telling them the awful consequences of them.” (Jacob 3:12)

A careful reading of Jacob 2 presents a sobering list of these awful consequences.

- ' “I have seen the *sorrow*. . . (2:31)
- ' “I have . . . heard the mourning . . . (2:31)
- ' “wickedness . . .” (2:31)
- ' “abominations . . .” (2:31)
- ' “cries of the fair daughters . . .” (2:32)
- ' “lead away captive . . .” (2:33)

- ' "sore curse . . ." (2:33)
- ' "destruction . . ." (2:33)
- ' "ye have come unto great condemnation . . ." (2:34)
- ' "greater iniquities . . ." (2:35)
- ' "Ye have broken the hearts of your tender wives . . ." (2:35)
- ' "Ye have . . . lost the confidence of your children . . ." (2:35)
- ' "the sobbing of their hearts ascend up to God against you . . ." (2:35)
- ' "many hearts died, pierced with deep wounds." (2:35)

Awful consequences indeed!

Mostly these problems begin with kissing. President Kimball spoke plainly on this matter:

When young people begin to date, the temptations increase profoundly. Hollywood would have us believe that even young romances, once so innocent and awkward, must be consummated with a kiss. And the kind of kisses that we often see in movies are intended to arouse sexual feelings.

"Kissing has been prostituted and has been degenerated to develop lust instead of affection, honor, and admiration," said President Kimball. "To kiss in casual dating is asking for trouble.

"What is miscalled the soul kiss is an abomination and stirs passion that results in the eventual loss of virtue. Even if timely courtship justifies a kiss, it should be a clean, decent, sexless one. . . . If the soul kiss with its passion were eliminated from dating, there would be an immediate upswing in chastity and honor, with fewer illegitimate babies, fewer unwed mothers, fewer forced marriages, and fewer unhappy souls. With the absence of the soul kiss, necking would be greatly reduced. Its younger sister, petting, would be totally eliminated. Both are abominations of their own right and kind." (In Conference Report, Sydney Australia Area Conference, 29 Feb. 1976, p. 55.)

The spread of sexual transgression in our day is terrifying. Thirty-seven years ago President Benson said,

No sin is causing the loss of the Spirit of the Lord among our people

more today than sexual promiscuity. It is causing our people to stumble, damning their growth, darkening their spiritual powers and making them subject to other sins

Recently, a young man commented that if he quit reading books, watching TV, seeing movies, reading newspapers and magazines, and going to school, there was a chance he might live a clean life. And this explains, in large part, the extent to which this insidious evil has spread . . . (C.R., October 1964, Saturday Morning Session)

Solomon, who himself was guilty of some of these abominations (see Jacob 2:24) probably wrote the following about this matter in Proverbs. In these verses, if you will forget gender and assume that the issue here is immorality and not an immoral woman and a foolish man, the lessons will be powerful:

With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips she forced him.

He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;

Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.

Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth.

Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths.

For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her.

Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.
(Prov. 7:21-27)

Earlier verses in this chapter describe “him” as passing near “her corner.” But verse 12 tells us that she “lieth in wait at every corner.” (Prov. 7:8,12) What a description of immorality in our day. It does lie in wait at every corner. Dr. Pitirim A. Sorokin said,

A consuming interest in sex has so penetrated our national culture that it has been estimated we encounter some kind of sexual lure every nine minutes of our waking day. (Cited by Hugh B. Brown in "Purity is Power," at a BYU Tri-Stake Fireside)

I do not know the date Dr. Sorokin made the statement above, but President Brown quoted it in 1962! My guess that is that "she" has taken over even more corners since then.

Proverbs 7:8 also tells us that "he went the way to her house." Notice what Proverbs 7:27 says of "her" house.

In Proverbs 9, the writer speaks more of this matter. Referring again to that person who yields to temptation he writes, "But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell." (Prov. 9:18)

3. BE HONEST.

"A lie is any communication given, to another with the intent to deceive." So taught Elder Marvin J. Ashton in the April 1982 General Conference. This little insight has stayed with me now for over 19 years. It is a powerful and clear lesson on honesty.

If you are like me, you have developed some feelings about this in recent years. I have become a raging skeptic in all matters outside of my relationships with the Saints, and sometimes in those relationships as well. I tend to be doubtful about warranties and guaranties and commercial commitments of every kind.

But I have had joy in meeting people who are utterly reliable, people in whom I can place the utmost confidence. Such people are becoming like the Father and the Son. Mahonri Moriancumer said of God, "I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie." (Ether 3:12) Enos said, "And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie . . ." (Enos 1:6)

On the other hand we have been told pretty clearly where lies originate. "he devil . . . is the father of all lies . . ." (2 Nephi 2:18) Note the adjective "all." Satan is the father of all lies. Ether tells us the same thing: . . . "the devil . . . is the father of all lies . . ." (Ether 8:25)

Moses 4 tells us that it happened in the pre-mortal life. When Lucifer was cast

down, “he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men.” (Moses 4:4)

There are not lies that do not matter. Any dishonesty is service to Satan and supports his plan for making all men miserable (see 2 Nephi 2:18,27).

4. USE LANGUAGE THAT REVERENCES GOD AND IS EDIFYING.

How often have you heard the following word: *NAYMCHEEZKRYSTAYMIN*? I have been troubled by how often I hear it at the end of prayers and testimonies. In D&C 63:61-63 the Lord warns

Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips—

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 authority.

Wherefore, let the church repent of their sins, and I, the Lord, will own them; otherwise they shall be cut off.

The actual language of the ten commandments does not refer to swearing, that is, profanity, but to this very principle: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” (Ex. 20:7.)

We must speak Christ's name in our prayers with belief and faith. We must speak it with the utmost reverence and the deepest gratitude. With what other perspective could we possibly approach God the Father and appeal to him in the name of his Only Begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased?

There is another dimension to inappropriate language. Elder Packer spoke of it.

A number of years ago I went with a brother to tow in a wrecked car. It had been a single car accident, and the car was demolished; the driver, though unhurt, had been taken to the hospital for treatment of shock and for examination.

The next morning he came asking for his car, anxious to be on his way. When he was shown the wreckage, his pent-up emotions and

disappointment, sharpened perhaps by his misfortune, exploded in a long stream of profanity. So obscene and biting were his words that they exposed years of practice with profanity. His words were heard by other customers, among them women, and must have touched their ears like acid.

One of my brothers crawled from beneath the car where he had been working with a large wrench. He too was upset, and with threatening gestures of the wrench (mechanics will know that a 16-inch crescent wrench is a formidable weapon), he ordered him off the premises. "We don't have to listen to that kind of language here," he said. And the customer left, cursing more obscenely than before.

Much later in the day he reappeared. Subdued, penitent, and avoiding everyone else, he found my brother.

"I have been in the hotel room all day," he said, "lying on the bed, tormented. I can't tell you how utterly ashamed I am for what happened this morning. My conduct was inexcusable. I have been trying to think of some justification, and I can think of only one thing: In all my life, never, not once, have I been told that my language was not acceptable. I have always talked that way. You were the first one who ever told me that my language was out of order."

Isn't it interesting that a man could grow to maturity, the victim of such a vile habit, and never meet a protest? How tolerant we have become! (Boyd K. Packer, "The Clean Voice of Youth," *New Era*, Jan. 1976, 5)

We may have more support in this matter of opposing filth than we believe. Many years ago I was *invited* by Uncle Sam to experience the U. S. Army. During some initial training in Georgia I listened to an almost unceasing barrage of filthy jokes. The jokes came mostly from instructors at the beginning of lessons. On one occasion I sat in a grassy area with 23 other young men waiting for instruction in the use of the bayonet. As the sergeant began to speak he launched into what I knew would be another filthy story. A former missionary companion was seated next to me. We were the only Latter-day Saints in the group. I glanced at him and he at me, and then we dropped our heads and tried to take our minds somewhere else. The lecture stopped for a moment, and then the instructor, who must have seen our action and interpreted it correctly, asked, "Does anyone mind if I tell this story?"

I glanced at my friend who nodded at me. We kept our heads down but raised our hands. The silence returned and continued until it was obvious that something had happened. We raised our eyes and found that almost every hand in the platoon was up.

I heard a young lady speak of a dance at her high school—Mountain View in Orem, Utah. She said that during one dance the DJ had played a particularly offensive song. “One half of the people in the auditorium walked out,” she told us. Later she was invited to a dance at another local high school. She was standing near the DJ’s and hear one of them say to the other about this same song, “This is great music, but you can’t play it at Mountain View.”

What a compliment! And what a blessing it would be to us if everyone knew that we would not tolerate filthy or vulgar or degrading or unkind language. We ought to be intent on using the kind of language that pleases the Lord:

He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances. (D&C 62:16)

Cease drunkenness; and let your words tend to edifying one another. (D&C 136:24)

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation . . . (1 Peter 1:15)

And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures—walking in holiness before the Lord. (D&C 20:69)

CONCLUSION: Elder Asay has said exactly what I would like to say:

Much, much more could be said about the war for the souls of men and the whole armor of God. The war on the earth began in the days of Adam, continued down through the years with Moses and the children of Israel, and still rages in a dispensation known as the fulness of times—a dispensation ushered in by the revelations received through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Hence, the issue of protective coverings enabling us to withstand the fiery darts of Satan will continue to be of

great significance.

We must put on the armor of God spoken of by the Apostle Paul and [page 21] reiterated in a modern revelation (see D&C 27:15–18). We must also “put on the armor of righteousness” (2 Ne. 1:23) symbolized by the temple garment. Otherwise, we may lose the war and perish. (Carlos E. Asay, “The Temple Garment: ‘An Outward Expression of an Inward Commitment,’ ” Ensign, Aug. 1997, 20–21)

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