

A Compensatory Spiritual Power for the Righteous

NEIL L. ANDERSEN

My dear brothers and sisters, I am humbled to stand before you. Many of you will know that the First Presidency originally assigned Elder L. Tom Perry to speak here today. I am honored to stand in his place.

In the past ninety days we have witnessed, as President Russell M. Nelson likes to say, “the graduation” of two extraordinary Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. President Boyd K. Packer was made a General Authority just after my tenth birthday. Elder L. Tom Perry was ordained an Apostle before my wife, Kathy, and I were married, when we were students here at Brigham Young University. For more than forty years they sat together in the Quorum of the Twelve, and for more than half of that time they sat next to one another. President Packer, with a smile, would say that the Lord put Elder Perry next to him to kick him in the ankles when he got out of line.

During those many decades they moved across the world and used every opportunity to testify of the divine mission of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the restoration of His gospel. And as they bore witness of Him, He refined them, purified them, and sanctified them. President Packer, who was by his nature a very private man, would lament at times that members of the Quorum of the Twelve were destined to die onstage.

President Packer had a very quick wit. One Thursday morning before our meeting began in the temple, Elder Perry was conversing with me at the junior end of the semicircle of chairs. President Packer, speaking in a cheerful voice so all could hear, said, “Tom, come up here where you belong. Ten good men have died to put you in this chair.”

They both moved through the veil with dignity and spiritual power.

On the week that Elder Perry passed away, he attended our meeting on Tuesday. On Tuesday night, as recorded by his son, Lee, he had a spiritual experience that let him know his time was soon.¹

With Elder Russell M. Nelson on assignment in eastern Europe, Elder Perry, on Wednesday morning, called Elder Oaks and Elder Ballard to his apartment. He told them his time was short and that he would not be coming back into the office. He recorded a six-minute message for the Quorum of the Twelve, telling us he loved us, encouraging us in the work ahead, and bearing his sure witness of the Savior. We

Neil L. Andersen was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when this devotional address was given on 18 August 2015 during Campus Education Week.

were sobered as that recording was played for us Thursday morning in the temple.

The First Presidency went Thursday afternoon to say their good-byes to their dear friend. Elder Nelson called Elder Perry from Bulgaria Thursday evening. On Friday morning President Packer rose from his feeble condition and traveled to Elder Perry's apartment to say good-bye. They reflected on their many years together. President Packer reminded him that Elder Perry had always said that he wanted to go through the veil at least one day before President Packer. They rejoiced that they would soon see each other on the other side.

On Friday afternoon, just after 4:00 p.m., Kathy and I had the chance to visit with Elder and Sister Perry. Elder Perry was sitting in a comfortable chair, weak but conversant. He asked us, as he did all the members of the Twelve, to watch over and care for his dear Barbara. He expressed his love for us and we expressed our love for him. I told him that in a few years, as I followed him out of this earthly experience, I hoped he would be there to greet me. He promised that, if given permission, he would. He told us he would do all that he could to bless our work from the other side of the veil.

Less than twenty-four hours later he stepped through the veil. Thirty-four days later President Packer followed him. I, with you, revere these two disciples of Christ. I confirm to you that they were honest men, holy men—devoted to the callings that they had received and full of the pure love of Christ. I testify that we will yet see them again.

My brothers and sisters, we live in very interesting times. Here are some selected statistics from recent studies:

- Worldwide there has been a 35 percent increase in terrorist attacks in the past year.²
- In 2013, 41 percent of all births in the United States were to unmarried women, compared to 18 percent thirty-five years ago.³
- Adult Americans claiming no religious affiliation increased from 16 percent in 2007 to 23 percent in 2014.⁴
- Nearly seven in ten Americans say doctors should be legally allowed to assist terminally ill patients in committing suicide.⁵
- There are now more than 43 million refugees worldwide, displaced from their homes because of conflict or persecution.⁶

And how about this very recent concerning headline: "California College Will Now Ask Students to Pick from Six [Different] Genders" in their application for admission.⁷

And this one: "Another Day, Another Mass Shooting in America."⁸

Finally, this sobering headline: "Why Selling Baby Parts Should Shock No One."⁹

Let me close with a happy headline from the *Washington Post*: "World's Youngest Double Hand Transplant Recipient 'Woke up Smiling.'"¹⁰

As I said, we live in very interesting times, yet marvelous times. We are in the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the fulness of the gospel has been restored and as the world is being prepared for the glorious Second Coming of the Savior. These are days of looking forward, of beautiful anticipation. These are our days.

We know as we approach the Second Coming of the Savior that our world will be full of commotion and confusion. Many in society will disregard the commandments of God. I have often quoted this statement by President Thomas S. Monson: "Where once the standards of the Church and the standards of society were mostly compatible, now there is a wide chasm between us, and it's growing ever wider."¹¹

As these temptations and distractions increase and as the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes less palatable to the world, sadly we will see more among us who will lose their way.

When I was a young man growing up in southeastern Idaho, I remember frequently hearing a quote from Elder Heber C. Kimball given in 1867:

To meet the difficulties that are coming, it will be necessary for you to have a knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such a character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. . . .

. . . The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light.¹²

More than ever in the sixty-four years of my life, this prophetic statement by Elder Kimball is coming to pass. Deep, continuing conversion is becoming much more important for those desiring to keep their covenants. It is becoming more and more precarious to stand on borrowed light.

You may think that my message is sounding a little gloomy, but stay with me. Hope is on the way.

The Lord has long anticipated this important period of human history. He knows the end from the beginning. The Savior has assured us in our day, “Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you.”¹³

As we find our way in a world less attentive to the commandments of God, we will certainly be prayerful, but we need not be overly alarmed. The Lord will bless His Saints with the added spiritual power necessary to meet the challenges of our day.

Here is my major theme this morning: As evil increases in the world, there is a compensatory spiritual power for the righteous. As the world slides from its spiritual moorings, the Lord prepares the way for those who seek

Him, offering them greater assurance, greater confirmation, and greater confidence in the spiritual direction they are traveling. The gift of the Holy Ghost becomes a brighter light in the emerging twilight.

To understand better, think of these comparisons: If the world were growing more physically dark, He could give us enhanced night vision. If loud noises were constantly in our ears, He could give us a filtering mechanism to block the unwanted sound. If the race we were running was extended, He could give us increased lung and muscle capacity. If the exam we were taking was more difficult, He could quicken our minds—a blessing many here at BYU would like to receive.

My brothers and sisters, as evil increases in the world, there is a compensatory power, an additional spiritual endowment, a revelatory gift for the righteous.

This added blessing of spiritual power does not settle upon us just because we are part of this generation. It is willingly offered to us; it is eagerly put before us. But as with all spiritual gifts, it requires our desiring it, pursuing it, and living worthy of receiving it. “For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift?”¹⁴

Faith is the muscle of spiritual knowledge and power. Faith is a spiritual gift of God, but it is developed and magnified as we eagerly pursue our journey of embracing and following the Savior. I remember once long ago, before I was serving as a General Authority, having a man approach me whom I had known for some time in business. We talked about a challenge he was facing in his life, and I gave him some of my thoughts.

He then said to me, “Neil, you have something I don’t have. You have faith in God.”

The way he said it to me, I sensed he felt that having faith was not something chosen or determined by me or by him but that somewhere in the lottery of life my gene pool had brought a quality of believing and trusting

in God that his gene pool had not. This, my brothers and sisters, is not a correct notion of faith in God or faith in Christ. And you believe it above all others because you are here at Campus Education Week.

Let us have confidence in the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to lift us and to lift those we love to greater heights. One of President Packer’s favorite scriptures was in Alma 31—and he would read it to us in the way I will read it to you:

As the preaching of the word had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, it had had [a] more powerful effect upon the minds of the people than the sword, or anything else, which had happened unto them—therefore Alma thought it was expedient that they should try the virtue of the word of God.¹⁵

There is virtue in the word of God. There is power in the testimony of Jesus Christ. There is truth in the Savior’s gospel. It will shape us and mold us as we allow its powerful effects to move upon our mind and upon our spirit.

Our Heavenly Father desires that faith will grow within the hearts of all His sons and daughters. As one repents, opens her heart, or seeks to strengthen his faith, the Lord is magnanimous and generous in return. Alma said, “Remember, that God is merciful unto all who believe on his name.”¹⁶ You of course will remember that Alma talked about arousing our faculties, experimenting upon the words of Christ, and exercising faith to give additional place for faith to grow.¹⁷

Never forget that the seed must be nourished. We need to help those we love to understand that faith is not stagnant. It is either growing or it is diminishing. We have all been taught these things. Faith grows by repentance and obedience, by prayer and scripture study, by attending Church and taking the sacrament, and by serving and associating with other believers.

I emphasize once again: As evil increases in the world, the Lord does not leave us on the same footing. In a world that would diminish or discard or impair belief, there is an added spiritual power for those who are willing to set their course on increasing their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let me give you three examples from our world today that reveal the Lord’s hand at work in bringing more spiritual power to His Saints.

It has only been in the last few years that technology has allowed us to link our generations more completely. A year and a half ago we gave the challenge to the youth to bring as many names to the temple as baptisms they perform in the temple.

Elder Samuel Hepworth, a missionary in the Chile Concepción Mission, wrote me just last month, explaining the spiritual power of finding his ancestors. He began his letter this way:

Dear Elder Andersen,

I know that I am not to write the apostles directly, but my mission president gave me permission.

Thank you for [the] challenge from 2014. That changed my life completely. [It] was my catalyst to get me going on my own. [My trips to the temple were] made even more special by bringing my own names. . . . As I did my own work instead of just following my mom’s instructions, I found a greater satisfaction than ever in the work, and the Spirit entered my life even stronger.

I have been sharing [the challenge] with all of the missionaries and members here in Chile. . . . I have never seen more hearts turn to their fathers than is happening right now.¹⁸

Along with Elder Hepworth, the youth of the Church have responded by the thousands and tens of thousands, and names submitted by youth have more than doubled since the challenge was issued only eighteen months ago. As the hearts of the children have turned

to their fathers, the youth have been given an added gift of spiritual power. If you have not seen this yet in the youth, go to lds.org and read of their experiences or, better yet, talk to those youth who are in your family or who live near you. If you or members of your family have not committed yourselves to finding names from your family for your ordinances in the temple, now is the time to begin.

Let me share a second example: In the twenty-two years that I have been serving as a General Authority of the Church, the number of temples has increased from forty-four to 147. In only twenty years the Lord has given us three times the number of temples.¹⁹

Why is that? We now have temples closer and more accessible than ever before. But in these times of commotion the Lord expects us to adjust our habits and be in His house more often. Listen to these beautiful words by President Monson:

As we enter through the doors of the temple, we leave behind us the distractions and confusion of the world. Inside this sacred sanctuary, we find beauty and order. There is rest for our souls and a respite from the cares of our lives.

As we attend the temple, there can come to us a dimension of spirituality and a feeling of peace which will transcend any other feeling which could come into the human heart. We will grasp the true meaning of the words of the Savior when He said: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). . . .

My brothers and sisters, in our lives we will have temptations; we will have trials and challenges. As we go to the temple, as we remember the covenants we make there, we will be better able to overcome those temptations and to bear our trials. In the temple we can find peace.²⁰

Did you hear the promises from God's prophet? We will be better able to overcome temptations, bear our trials, and find peace.

Let me read you a letter from a very righteous woman who recently experienced a tragedy in her marriage that was not of her doing. She wrote:

I had a beautiful experience in the temple this morning. My husband and I usually went to the temple each year on our anniversary. I decided a week ago that it might be good for my emotional recovery to go to the temple even though, of course, he would not be with me on this day that we should have celebrated our twentieth anniversary.

For the past two years I have researched and done the ordinances for a family. In a miraculous series of events, around the time I first became involved in family history (after everything happened with my husband), I found a brother of my great-great-great-grandmother . . . was missing from the family tree and had not had his temple work completed and had not been sealed to his parents although my grandfather had had the rest of the family's work completed years ago.

I asked my brother-in-law to do his temple work, and then I did the work for his wife. When I was completing the initiatory work, I felt her presence so strongly, and in my mind I heard her say the words "find my family," with the implied message to complete their temple work. Through researching I would discover that she had seven sons! Two had had their temple work done by others, but I was able to submit the information for the other five sons and their wives. My 17-year-old son did the baptisms for the sons, my brother-in-law did the initiatories, and my missionary son and his fellow missionaries did the endowments. My teenage daughter and I completed the ordinances for the sons' wives.

Even though all the preliminary ordinances had been done, because of my own marriage situation I had not wanted to go to the temple to participate in the sealings for this family. It was too painful. However, as time passed I have found that in the last few months I have been doing better and have been thinking about it. During the last few weeks especially, I have felt compelled to complete the sealings for this family. The work that needed to be done

included sealing the woman whose words “find my family” had made such an impression on me as well as her two younger sisters to their parents.

So I made the decision I would go today, a day I celebrated my own wedding anniversary for so many years. I was very nervous, but I took courage. I have never done sealings in the temple without my husband, so this was really a new experience for me . . . , but the reality is that it is now necessary for me to do many things requiring faith that I have never done before alone.

I felt very grateful for a kind and compassionate sealer in the temple today . . . , and one of the other men in the session was our stake patriarch, who gave my son his patriarchal blessing. I don’t think he recognized me, but having him there put me at ease. The temple workers were very nice to me, and I really appreciated it because (unknown to them) I was very nervous. I am sure the Lord knew how I felt.

Somewhat surprising to me, I deeply appreciated the time of sitting in the sealing room waiting for my turn and thinking about the blessings in the sealing ordinance as they were repeated over and over again. I participated in the last sealing of the session, acting as proxy for my great-great-great-great grandmother with her husband, as their son, Benjamin, missing from the family for so many years, was now sealed to them. I felt an overwhelming and unexpected feeling that they were there. It was a beautiful testament to me of the power of eternal families as, first, their son was sealed to them and then I acted as proxy for the woman whose words “find my family” had touched me so much, and our stake patriarch was proxy for the couple’s five sons. They were then sealed, linking this family together. It was truly an amazing experience.

Afterward I went to the celestial room . . . and had a few minutes to ponder on eternity alone—or maybe not alone—as I read 2 Kings 6:16, which speaks of unseen heavenly hosts that are at times “with us.” I felt that feeling today in the temple.

On a hard day, I was not expecting this, but I’m sure it was a special blessing for me and another assurance in my life that I can move forward. . . .

I felt very blessed today in the temple! It gives me hope for happy days ahead.²¹

Listen to the poetic words of my friend,
Thomas L. Kay:

I will leave the tumult of the world.

I will leave the world behind.

I will go to where the Spirit is,

In God’s temple I will find.

I will find the things the world can’t give.

I’ll escape this mortal strife.

I will find the things that matter most.

I will hear the words of life.²²

The temple is an added gift from heaven to us. We need to embrace it with renewed dedication. Our children will need the temple even more in the years ahead. Teach them to love the temple. Help them to be ready to receive their endowment and eventually their sealing. Teach them how to prepare for these sacred ordinances and help them see how doing these ordinances will be a constant gift to them throughout their lives. As they do temple work, they will not only go through the temple but, as Brother Truman G. Madsen used to say, they will allow the temple to go through them.²³

Our world of technology and communication, with all of its distractions, provides the third example of a compensatory spiritual blessing for the righteous. The words of the Lord’s prophet, the First Presidency, and the Quorum of the Twelve are always available to lighten our path and help show us the way. Their united voice, if followed, will help set aside the enticing voices of the world. The men who occupy these positions would claim no personal perfection, but I witness to you that as the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve prayerfully approach the Lord, He shapes our thinking and direction and reveals His will for His covenant people, and indeed for all the world.

In recent months the First Presidency and the Twelve have felt an undeniable direction from the Lord to declare and reemphasize the Sabbath day and the importance of worthily partaking of the sacrament. As we take the sacrament, we remember the Savior and His Atonement. We come repenting of our sins, pledging our loyalty to covenants made with Him, and hearing again the promises He makes to us. To always have His Spirit with us is a pearl of enormous value. Receiving the sacrament on Sunday is more and more like an oasis in the desert—bubbling with cool spring water, quenching our spiritual thirst and relieving our parched souls.

President Russell M. Nelson’s April general conference talk was titled “The Sabbath Is a Delight.” President Nelson explained how he approached the Sabbath:

*In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things **not** to do on the Sabbath. It wasn’t until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a **sign** between me and my Heavenly Father (see Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don’ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, “What **sign** do I want to give to God?” That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear.²⁴*

In our day the Lord has promised that honoring the Sabbath will help us in keeping ourselves “unspotted from the world.”²⁵

Can you see the Lord’s hand in giving us the technology to turn our children toward their fathers? Can you see why the Lord would greatly increase the temples upon the earth? Can you see the Lord’s purposes in helping us to more fully honor the Sabbath day? These are compensatory spiritual gifts from heaven for the righteous. And there are many, many

more. As we recognize and embrace them, they heighten our spiritual sensitivities, offering greater assurance and confidence. The precious gift of the Holy Ghost becomes a stronger beacon, and we more clearly see those things that are unseen.

This added spiritual power does not just fall upon us. It comes as we act. The scriptures tell us that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,”²⁶ but he and his family still needed to build and enter the ark.

God prepared the means for the children of Israel to be healed from the fiery flying serpents, but He still required that they look upon the serpent of brass attached to Moses’ staff.²⁷

The Saints sang in our dispensation, “We’ll find the place which God for us prepared,”²⁸ but they still had to pick up their handcarts and go west.

Let me return to the beautiful quote by Brother Heber C. Kimball:

To meet the difficulties that are coming, it will be necessary for you to have a knowledge of the truth of this work for yourselves. The difficulties will be of such a character that the man or woman who does not possess this personal knowledge or witness will fall. . . .

. . . The time will come when no man nor woman will be able to endure on borrowed light.²⁹

I like to think of it this way: If two people are walking together along a very gentle terrain, one lantern is often sufficient. But when the time comes, as it does with each child, that he or she steps away from us to take his or her own journey, our light is no longer sufficient to light his or her way. And while one may be linked tightly to a companion—if you are fortunate enough to have a companion of faith—if we unexpectedly face jagged rocks and uneven cliffs, each needs his or her own lantern to light the path.

In this month’s First Presidency message, President Monson said:

*We must develop the faith necessary to survive spiritually and to project a light for others. We must nurture our testimony until it becomes an anchor to our lives.*³⁰

I pray that your faith in Him will always be an anchor to your souls. I give you my sure witness that Jesus is the Christ. He is resurrected. He lives and He guides His holy work upon the earth. As you look to the Lord Jesus Christ in all you do, may your faithfulness, I pray, bless those you love as they also seek to follow the Savior and follow in your path. I promise you that as you embrace the spiritual gifts prepared for the righteous, He will steady you, strengthen you, shape you, and secure you. You will be His. I so witness, in His holy name, the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See Sam Penrod, “A ‘Sweet, Peaceful Passing’ for LDS Apostle, Son Says,” *KSL*, 31 May 2015, ksl.com/?sid=34879432.

2. See Abigail Williams, “State Dept: 35 Percent Increase in Terrorist Attacks Worldwide,” *NBC News*, 19 June 2015, nbc-news.com/news/us-news/state-dept-35-increase-terrorist-attacks-worldwide-n378416.

3. See Joyce A. Martin and others, “Births: Final Data for 2013,” *National Vital Statistics Reports* 64, no. 1 (15 January 2015): 2, 6–7, cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_01.pdf.

4. See “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” *Religion and Public Life*, Pew Research Center, 12 May 2015, pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape.

5. See Andrew Dugan, “In U.S., Support Up for Doctor-Assisted Suicide,” *Politics*, Gallup, 27 May 2015, gallup.com/poll/183425/support-doctor-assisted-suicide.aspx.

6. See “Refugees: The Numbers,” *Resources for Speakers on Global Issues*, United Nations, un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/refugees/index/shtml.

7. “California College Will Now Ask Students to Pick from 6 Genders,” *CBS News*, 30 July 2015, cbsnews.com/news/uc-irvine-california-college-ask-students-pick-from-6-genders-in-application.

8. Fareed Zakaria, “Another Day, Another Mass Shooting in America,” *Newsmax*, 31 July 2015, newsmax.com/FareedZakaria/Gun-Control-Homeland-Security-Bobby-Jindal-Rick-Perry/2015/07/31/id/664737.

9. Cal Thomas, “Why Selling Baby Parts Should Shock No One,” *Baltimore Sun*, 25 July 2015, baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/bal-why-selling-baby-parts-should-shock-no-one-20150723-story.html.

10. Elahe Izadi, “World’s Youngest Double Hand Transplant Recipient ‘Woke up Smiling,’” *To Your Health*, *Washington Post*, 29 July 2015, washingtonpost.com/news/to-your-health/wp/2015/07/29/worlds-youngest-double-hand-transplant-recipient-woke-up-smiling.

11. Thomas S. Monson, “Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, May 2011.

12. John Nicholson, quoting Heber C. Kimball, in Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967), 450.

13. D&C 68:6.

14. D&C 88:33.

15. Alma 31:5.

16. Alma 32:22.

17. See Alma 32:27.

18. Personal letter from Elder Sam Hepworth, 22 June 2015.

19. By the end of 1995, there were forty-seven temples worldwide.

20. Thomas S. Monson, “Blessings of the Temple,” *Ensign*, May 2015.

21. Personal email, 30 June 2015.

22. Thomas L. Kay, “Leave the World Behind,” 7 August 2015.

23. See Truman G. Madsen, “Foundations of Temple Worship,” *BYU–Idaho devotional address*, 26 October 2004.

24. Russell M. Nelson, "The Sabbath Is a Delight," *Ensign*, May 2015; emphasis in original.

25. D&C 59:9.

26. Genesis 6:8.

27. See Numbers 21:6–9; see also 1 Nephi 17:41; Helaman 8:14–15.

28. "Come, Come, Ye Saints," *Hymns*, 2002, no. 30.

29. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 450.

30. Thomas S. Monson, "First Presidency Message: Stand as a Light," *Ensign*, August 2015.