

Being One with Christ

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My dear friends, there is no question that we live in the last days. We are witnessing the culmination of this last dispensation where the Lord is bringing his great latter-day work to its conclusion. From the beginning all the prophets from Adam to the present day have prophesied concerning the last days. They have done so because it is the time in which the families of the earth will be gathered in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.

We are continually being tried and tested as individuals and as a church. We are engaged in a mighty conflict. We are at war. We are enlisted in the cause of Christ to fight against Lucifer and all that is carnal and evil in the world.

Our prophet, President Gordon B. Hinckley, has said:

We are engaged in a great eternal struggle that concerns the very souls of the sons and daughters of God. We are not losing. We are winning. We will continue to win if we will be faithful and true. We can do it. We must do it. We will do it. There is nothing the Lord has asked of us that in faith we cannot accomplish. ["The War We Are Winning," *Ensign*, November 1986, p. 44; emphasis in original]

This is the time and season in the Lord's affairs that the greatest generation of young men and women have been placed on the earth. I have often heard President Hinckley refer to the young people of the Church today as being the best generation ever. As such, your work is at hand. It is a time to stand firm, to rally to the Savior's banner, to declare with unwavering allegiance our loyalty to his great cause. All of us united together *can* do it. *We will do it!*

In Alma 26:5–6, the great missionary Ammon saw our day and explained the need to gather the sons and daughters of God. In verse 6, he said:

Yea, they shall not be beaten down by the storm at the last day; yea, neither shall they be harrowed up by the whirlwinds; but . . . they shall be gathered together in their place, that the storm cannot penetrate to them; yea, neither shall they be driven with fierce winds whithersoever the enemy listeth to carry them.

Marilyn S. Bateman, the wife of Merrill J. Bateman, gave this devotional address on 5 January 1999.

The way we are gathered is through the restored gospel and its priesthood and by fully living its precepts. Its purpose is to make us one with Christ and with each other.

Unity is and will be important because of the difficult times we face and will face as the storms come. Lewis Timberlake used an analogy in nature to illustrate this concept:

While on a tour of California's giant sequoias, the guide pointed out that the sequoia tree has roots just barely below the surface.

"That's impossible!" I exclaimed. "I'm a country boy, and I know that if the roots don't grow deep into the earth, strong winds will blow the trees over."

"Not sequoia trees," said the guide. "They grow only in groves and their roots intertwine under the surface of the earth. So, when the strong winds come, they hold each other up."

*There's a lesson here. In a sense, people are like the giant sequoias. Family, friends, neighbors, the church body and other groups should be havens so that when the strong winds of life blow, these people can serve as reinforcement and can strive together to hold each other up. [Lewis Timberlake, from *Timberlake Monthly*, in *Points to Ponder, Reader's Digest*, May 1989, p. 48]*

If we become one with Christ and with each other, we will stand and not be wasted when the storms and whirlwinds and evil come down upon us. But we will achieve oneness with each other only as we seek to be one with Christ. The whole concept of becoming one with the Savior and the protection that follows is wonderfully presented in the scriptures through the story of Helaman's stripling warriors.

Some 60 years before the birth of Christ, the Nephites were faced with the evil storm of war. The Lamanites sought their destruction. The people of Ammon had joined the Nephites, but because of their oath not to take up weapons of war, they were not in a position to defend their country. Their young sons were exempt from this oath, however, and under the leadership of

the prophet Helaman they came to the defense of the Nephite nation.

Listen to a description of these young warriors and their feelings. Alma 53 introduces them to us:

They were all young men [who] were exceedingly valiant for courage, and also for strength and activity; but behold, this was not all—they were men who were true at all times in whatsoever thing they were entrusted.

Yea, they were men of truth and soberness, for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him. [Alma 53:20–21]

Helaman described them as "strict to remember the Lord their God from day to day; yea, they do observe to keep his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments continually; and their faith is strong in the prophecies" (Alma 58:40).

Even more telling is what these valiant young people said to Helaman: "Father, behold our God is with us, and he will not suffer that we should fall" (Alma 56:46). They knew that God would protect and deliver them. They had been taught by their mothers to have such a faith in their Savior "that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them" (Alma 56:47). What were the effects of such great faith in Christ and the oneness they had with their Redeemer? Alma recorded:

Not one soul of them . . . did perish. . . .

. . . And we do justly ascribe it to the miraculous power of God, because of their exceeding faith in that which they had been taught to believe—that there was a just God, and whosoever did not doubt, that they should be preserved by his marvelous power. [Alma 57:25–26]

In closing I would like to quote from President James E. Faust's First Presidency message for January 1999:

It is my testimony that we are facing difficult times. We must be courageously obedient. My witness is that we will be called upon to prove our spiritual stamina, for the days ahead will be filled with affliction and difficulty. But with the assuring comfort of a personal relationship with God, we will be given a calming courage. From the Divine so near we will receive the quiet assurance:

“My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

*“And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes” (D&C 121:7–8). [James E. Faust, “That We Might Know Thee,” *Ensign*, January 1999, p. 5]*

It is my prayer, my young, valiant brothers and sisters, that we will seek to be one with our Savior, Jesus Christ, by applying the principles of the gospel in our lives and living obediently to his commandments so that as we live through these last days our united front will not be penetrated and we will stand together as true followers of Christ; “that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (Moroni 7:48). This is my hope in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.