

“A More Excellent Hope”

RUSSELL M. NELSON

Sister Nelson and I extend greetings for a Happy New Year to all of you. At this fireside for college-age youth, thousands are with us on the campus of Brigham Young University. Elsewhere, many are participating via satellite transmission, including congregations assembled in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and other locations in the Caribbean area. Having recently visited Saints in those islands, we are grateful to greet you once again. In Santo Domingo, we stood on the site where a new temple will be built. There we envisioned the day when you may enter that holy house and receive all the blessings that are not as accessible at the present time.

This morning became historic when President Howard W. Hunter, President Gordon B. Hinckley, and President Thomas S. Monson officially dedicated the new Bountiful Temple. They also convey their greetings to you. The Brethren love and honor the youth of the Church and thank you for your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is his church, and he welcomes each of us with open arms.

We thank members of the institute choir from Ephraim, Utah, for their music. The words to their hymn seem particularly appropriate for our first fireside of 1995.

*Come, let us anew our journey pursue,
Roll round with the year,
And never stand still till the Master appear.
His adorable will let us gladly fulfill,
And our talents improve
By the patience of hope and the labor of love.*
[Charles Wesley, *Hymns*, 1985, no. 217]

As we begin a new year, we desire to improve our talents—by the patience of hope and the labor of love. We all have hope. We hope for academic attainment. Some hope to find an eternal companion, perhaps even this year. And some just plain hope to survive. Speaking of companions, I like the counsel given by President David O. McKay. He said that “during courtship we should keep our eyes wide open, but after marriage keep them half shut” (“Five Ideals Contributive to a Happy, Enduring Marriage,” devotional address given at Brigham Young University, 11 October 1955, p. 8; see also *CR*, April 1956,

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p. 9). Sister Nelson has been kind to follow that advice as she has overlooked my imperfections.

Some hopes are more important than others. A few are major enough to have merited New Year’s resolutions. As the title of my message tonight, I have borrowed a phrase from the Book of Mormon: “A More Excellent Hope.” That expression is attributed to Ether, who further declared that “man must *hope*, or he cannot receive an inheritance in the place which [God] hast prepared” (Ether 12:32; emphasis added).

That verse of scripture came to mind the other day as I read a letter from a troubled friend who is wrestling with a profound personal problem. I would like to quote excerpts from that letter.

The guilt and failure I feel make it almost impossible for me to repent. I am losing my faith. The sins were first; the doubts followed. The order is important because sin needed doubt. When I doubted my faith, sins lost their meaning and guilt its bite. Doubting began, then, as a means of anesthesia. It served to diminish the guilt that was literally tearing me apart. Before long, however, the doubts thrived independent of the needs that conceived them.

My painful indecisiveness, my tentativeness, my lack of direction, my paralysis of volition, my poverty of confidence, have caused suffering and depression. My family, my future, and my faith are at stake. I am losing hope.

Could the author of that letter, as well as others with such inner turmoil, have forgotten a promise of the Lord? He said, “Let virtue garrison thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). Unrighteous thoughts are the termites of character—and of confidence.

To the author and to each person listening, I bring a message of hope. Regardless of how desperate things may seem, remember, we can always have hope. Always! The Lord’s promise

to us is certain: “He that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome” (D&C 63:20). I repeat, there is always hope!

We came to the earth to receive our bodies and to be tested. Do you remember the scripture that states, “We will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them” (Abraham 3:25). Passing tests of obedience requires faith and hope—constantly.

Hope is part of our religion—mentioned in one of the Articles of Faith. “We follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we *hope* all things, we have endured many things, and *hope* to be able to endure all things” (Articles of Faith 1:13; emphasis added).

A correlation exists between hope and gratitude. To illustrate, let me share a personal experience. Last Thanksgiving, Sister Nelson and I hosted a memorable gathering. All of our locally available daughters, sons, and grandchildren were there, among others. We counted sixty-three people at the feast. As part of our after-dinner program, Sister Nelson distributed a sheet of paper to each individual, headed, “This year, I am thankful for. . .” The remainder of the page was blank. She asked each to complete the thought, either in writing or by drawing a picture. The papers were then collected, redistributed, and read aloud. We were asked to guess who composed each reply, which, incidentally, was not very difficult.

Meanwhile, I observed a pattern. Generally, the children were thankful for food, clothing, shelter, family (and, occasionally, pets). Their pictures were precious, though not likely to be shown in an art gallery. Our youth broadened their expressions to include gratitude for their country, freedom, and church. The adults noted most of those items, but in addition mentioned the temple, their love of the Lord, and appreciation for his atonement. Their hopes were combined with gratitude. Counting blessings is better than recounting problems.

Hope emanates from the Lord, and it transcends the bounds of this mortal sphere. Paul noted that “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). Only with an eternal perspective of God’s great plan of happiness can we ever find a more excellent hope. “What is it that ye shall hope for?” asked Moroni. He then answered his own question: “Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ” (Moroni 7:41; see also Alma 27:28). Paul expressed the same thought. He succinctly called the Lord Jesus Christ “our hope” (1 Timothy 1:1). Have you heard the old statement that “hope springs eternal?” It can only be true if that hope springs from him who is eternal.

Faith, Hope, and Charity

Have you noticed in the scriptures that hope seldom stands alone? Hope is often linked with faith. Hope and faith are commonly connected to charity. Why? Because hope is essential to faith; faith is essential to hope; faith and hope are essential to charity (see 1 Corinthians 13:13, Alma 7:24, Ether 12:28, D&C 4:5). They support one another like legs on a three-legged stool. All three relate to our Redeemer.

Faith stems from the Lord Jesus Christ. *Hope* centers in his atonement. *Charity* is manifest in the “pure love of Christ” (see Moroni 7:47). These three attributes are intertwined like strands in a cable and may not always be precisely distinguished. Together, they become our tether to the celestial kingdom. We read in the Book of Mormon:

There must be faith; and if there must be faith there must also be hope; and if there must be hope there must also be charity.

And except ye have charity ye can in nowise be saved in the kingdom of God; neither can ye be saved in the kingdom of God if ye have not faith;

neither can ye if ye have no hope. [Moroni 10:20–21; see also Ether 12:9, 34]

We know that there is an opposition in all things (see 2 Nephi 2:10–11, 15). Not surprisingly, therefore, faith, hope, and charity have their opposing forces. As illustrated in the letter from which I read, the antithesis of faith is doubt (for descriptions, see Hebrews 11:1, Alma 32:21); the opposite of hope is despair. And the counterpart of charity—the pure love of Christ—is disregard or even disdain for him and his commandments.

Therefore, in our quest for faith, hope, and charity, we must beware of the dangers of doubt, despair, or disdain for the divine. Moroni so taught: “If ye have no hope ye must needs be in despair; and despair cometh because of iniquity” (Moroni 10:22).

Each of you is special, valued, and needed in building the kingdom of God. The adversary is also aware of your worth and will surely taunt you. When Satan’s temptations come your way, please remember this counsel from Alma:

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and call on his holy name, and watch and pray continually, that ye may not be tempted above that which ye can bear. . . .

Having faith on the Lord; having a hope that ye shall receive eternal life; having the love of God always in your hearts. [Alma 13:28–29]

Anchor of Faith and Hope

A more excellent hope is mightier than a wistful wish. Hope, fortified by faith and charity, forges a force as strong as steel. Hope becomes an anchor to the soul. To this anchor, the faithful can cling, securely tethered to the Lord. Satan, on the other hand, would have us cast away that anchor and drift with the ebb tide of despair. If we will cling to the anchor of hope, it will be our safeguard *forever*.

A scripture declares:

Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast. [Ether 12:4; see also v. 9 and Hebrews 6:19]

The Lord of hope invites all people to come unto him. Steps toward him begin with faith, repentance, and baptism. Moroni explained that

the remission of sins bringeth meekness, and lowliness of heart; and . . . the visitation of the Holy Ghost, which Comforter filleth with hope and perfect love, . . . until the end shall come, when all the saints shall dwell with God. [Moroni 8:26; emphasis added]

That destiny can only be realized when we “have faith unto repentance” (Alma 34:15).

Insufficient hope often means insufficient repentance. John pleaded that “every man that hath this hope in [God] purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

The Fruits of Faith and Hope

The fruits of faith and hope are beautiful to behold. While in Hawaii recently, I met with a vice premier of the People’s Republic of China who had requested a visit to the Polynesian Cultural Center. The vice premier was accompanied by his wife and by the Chinese ambassador to the USA. More than twenty other dignitaries were also in their party. Because Elder Loren C. Dunn and I were already in Hawaii for meetings with Church leaders, we were asked to go to the Center and extend an official welcome to the Chinese delegation on behalf of the First Presidency and General Authorities. As these influential visitors toured the center and the adjoining BYU—Hawaii collegiate campus, they were impressed. The vice premier noted the sisterly and brotherly blending of some sixty different nationalities and

thirty different languages. He even noticed that Samoans sang with Fijians, that Tongans danced with Tahitians, and so on. The spirit of unity among the Latter-day Saint youth was easily evident to all of us.

Finally he asked the question “How do you promote such unity among your young people?” I answered his question later, when I presented a copy of the Book of Mormon to him, describing it as the precious document promoting that unity—and joy.

Tonight I thought of that unity as we sang words to the opening hymn, “Now Let Us Rejoice.” Written by W. W. Phelps in the 1830s, it was sung by early converts to the Church from many nations. Their difficulties adjusting to new neighbors, languages, and cultures must have been great. Yet they found hope in their new life together as brothers and sisters in the Church. Can you picture in your mind those early struggling Saints singing these words, just as we did tonight?

*In faith we’ll rely on the arm of Jehovah
To guide thru these last days of trouble and gloom,
And after the scourges and harvest are over,
We’ll rise with the just when the Savior doth come.
Then all that was promised the Saints will be given,
And they will be crown’d with the angels of heav’n,
And earth will appear as the Garden of Eden,
And Christ and his people will ever be one.
[“Now Let Us Rejoice,” *Hymns*, 1985, no. 3]*

This text is a remarkable statement of unity in the Lord’s work. Regardless of nationality, the Saints have always understood the word of the Lord, who declared: “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27).

When stake number two thousand was created in Mexico last month, President Howard W. Hunter said that the “great purposes of the Lord could not have been achieved with dissension or jealousy or selfishness. [The Lord] will bless each of us as we cast off pride, pray

for strength, and contribute to the good of the whole” (address delivered at the creation of the Mexico Mexico City Contreras Stake, 11 December 1994).

In stark contrast to that divine objective, the real world in which we live is divided by diverse languages, culture, and politics. Even the privileges of a democracy carry the burden of bickering in election campaigns. Contention is all about us. Ours is a pessimistic and cynical world—one that, to a great extent, has no hope in Christ nor in God’s plan for human happiness. Why such global contention and gloom? The reason is plain. If there is no hope in Christ, there is no recognition of a divine plan for the redemption of mankind. Without that knowledge, people mistakenly believe that existence today is followed by extinction tomorrow—that happiness and family associations are only ephemeral.

Such fallacies feed contention. The Book of Mormon bears record of these words from the first sermon of the Lord to the people of ancient America. Jesus said:

I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away. [3 Nephi 11:29–30]

The Importance of Names

Unfortunately, our modern society is caught up in divisive disputation. Often unkind nicknames are added to—or even substituted for—given names. Labels are invented to foster feelings of segregation and competition. For example, athletic teams acquire names to intimidate others, such as *Giants*, *Tigers*, *Warriors*, and so on. Harmless you say? Well, perhaps not overly important. But that is only the beginning. More serious separation

results when labels are utilized with the intent to demean, such as *Jew*, *Gentile*, *black*, *Hispanic*, or *Mormon*.

Even worse, such terms camouflage our true identity as sons and daughters of God. The desire of my heart is that we might rise above such worldly trends. God wants us to ascend to the highest level of our potential. He employs names that unify and sanctify.

He gave a new name to Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, saying, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men” (Genesis 32:28). In Hebrew, the term *Yisra’el* means “God prevails.” Jacob was given a name to match his divine destiny.

When we embrace the gospel and are baptized, we are born again. We take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ (see D&C 20:37). We are adopted as his sons and daughters and are known as brothers and sisters. We become members of his family; he is the father of our new life.

When we receive patriarchal blessings, we each receive a declaration of lineage—a name that links us to our heritage. We understand how we become joint heirs to promises once given by the Lord directly to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see Galatians 3:29, D&C 86:8–11).

In a prophecy regarding us, Peter utilized uplifting terms. He declared that we “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a *peculiar* people” (1 Peter 2:9; emphasis added). We recognize the adjectives *chosen*, *royal*, and *holy* as complimentary. But what about the term *peculiar*? Moses also employed the term when he said,

Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. [Deuteronomy 14:2; emphasis added]

I looked up the term *peculiar* in a modern dictionary. It is currently defined as “unusual” or “eccentric,” “strange,” “odd,” “standing apart from others,” “exclusive,” or “unique” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* [New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980]). But the term *peculiar* as used in the scriptures means something quite different. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term from which *peculiar* was translated is *cgullah*, which means “valued property,” or “treasure.”

In the New Testament, the Greek term from which *peculiar* was translated is *peripoiesis*, which means “possession,” or “an obtaining.” (Forms of the Greek suffix *poiesis* are seen in words currently in use in the English language. For example, doctors and druggists use a book known as a “*pharmacopoeia*,” which refers to possession or obtaining of pharmaceutical agents. The term used for the making of blood in the body is known as *hematopoiesis*. Students of the English language refer to onomatopoeia, a word made to sound like its referent, such as *buzz*, *crack*, or *twang*.)

With that understanding from the Greek, we can see that the scriptural term *peculiar* does not mean “strange” or “odd” at all. It signifies “valued treasure,” “made,” or “selected by God.” *Peculiar* is used in only seven verses of the Bible. In the Old Testament it is used five times (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 14:2, 26:18; Psalms 135:4; Ecclesiastes 2:8). In each instance, it has been translated from the Hebrew term that means “valued treasure.”

In the New Testament, *peculiar* is used two times (Titus 2:14, 1 Peter 2:9). In each instance it has been translated from a Greek term that signifies “possession” or “those selected by God as his own people.” Thus, for us to be identified by servants of the Lord as his *peculiar* people is a compliment of the highest order.

When we know who we are and what God expects of us, we are filled with hope and made aware of our significant role in his great plan of happiness. The day in which we now

live was foreseen even *before* Christ was born, when a prophet said:

Our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. [1 Nephi 15:18; emphasis added]

These are those latter days. We are the ones foredetermined and foreordained to fulfill that promise (see Alma 13:3). We are the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We are, in fact, the hope of Israel. We are God’s treasure, reserved for our particular place and time.

No wonder China’s vice premier noted what he did. Our faithful Latter-day Saints are filled with hope and motivated by love of the Lord Jesus Christ. With that hope, we assiduously avoid labels that could be interpreted as derogatory. When the Nephites were truly righteous, their previous patterns of polarization vanished.

There was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. . . .

There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

And how blessed were they! [4 Nephi 1:15, 17–18]

Unfortunately, the sequel to that story is not a happy one. This pleasant circumstance persisted until “a small part of the people . . . had revolted. . . and taken upon them the name of Lamanites” (4 Nephi 1:20), reviving old prejudices and teaching their children again to hate, “even as the Lamanites were taught to hate the children of Nephi from the

beginning” (4 Nephi 1:39). And so the polarizing process began all over again.

I hope that we may learn this important lesson and delete such segregating names from our personal vocabularies. Paul taught that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28; see also Colossians 3:11).

Our Savior invites us “to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33). Scripture declares that God “made the world and all things therein,” “And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:24, 26).

Greek Terms for Love

The New Testament contains many references to the Lord’s commandments that human beings love one another. Those verses become even more meaningful if considered in the New Testament’s original Greek language. It is a very rich language, having three different words for *love*, in contrast to the one available to us in the English language. The three Greek words for love apply at different levels of emotion. The term employed for the highest level of love is *agape*, to describe the kind of love we feel for the Lord or for other highly esteemed individuals. It is a term of great respect and adoration.

The second level of love is expressed by the term *phileo*, to describe affection felt for a beloved associate or friend. It, too, is a term of great respect, but perhaps less formal.

The third level of love is depicted by the term *eros*, to describe physical desire and intimacy.

As I quote a couple of scriptures, see if you can identify the appropriate Greek term. Quoting the Lord: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I

have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). Right! The level of love cited in this verse is that of *agape*: with highest respect.

Quoting Paul: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Romans 12:10). If you said *phileo*, the second level, you were correct. The Greek term from which this was translated is *philadelphia*.

I looked up all references to *love* in the New Testament, both in English and in Greek. I found that every reference that adjures us to love one another employs only the higher *agape* or *phileo* forms. Not a single reference utilized the third level, *eros*. One exception should be noted: “Beware of the scribes, which *love* to go in long clothing, and *love* salutations in the marketplaces” (Mark 12:38; emphasis added). In this instance, the word *love* was translated from the Greek term *thelo*, meaning “desire” or “delight.”

This little exercise confirms what we already know, that the Lord wants our love for each other to be most noble, reserving the intimate expression of physical love exclusively for husband and wife (for examples, see Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7, D&C 42:22, Moses 3:24, Abraham 5:18). I’ll translate that conclusion into simple terms. If you are tempted toward sexual behavior that is either errant or aberrant, hang an imaginary sign on the subject that says, “Please do not touch!” And, since deeds are preceded by thoughts, think *not* of now; think of *eternal life!*

Selection of a Marriage Partner

At the beginning of my message, I suggested (with a smile) that some of you might be hoping to find a prospect for marriage, perhaps in the not-too-distant future. May I offer a word of counsel, in addition to the quotation from President McKay about keeping your eyes wide open. The commandment to love our neighbors without discrimination is certain (see Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19, 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14;

James 2:8; D&C 59:6). But it must not be misunderstood. It applies generally. Selection of a marriage partner, on the other hand, involves *specific* and not *general* criteria. After all, you can only be married to *one* individual.

The probabilities of a successful marriage are known to be much greater if both the husband and wife are united in their religion, language, culture, and ethnic background. Thus, in choosing your eternal companion, please be wise. It's better not to fly in the face of constant head winds. Occasional squalls provide challenge enough.

Once those marriage vows are taken, you will want to be absolutely faithful to the Lord and to your companion, to whom you have promised complete fidelity. This year, Sister Nelson and I will celebrate our fiftieth wedding anniversary. We realize that the number of additional years together in mortality is steadily diminishing. How grateful we are that we have been faithful to each other in spite of numerous periods of separation imposed by wartime and professional duties. Someone once asked my sweetheart how she managed with ten children as well as a husband with a demanding surgical practice, major responsibilities in the Church, and little time to help. Her reply was unforgettable. "When I married him," she said, "I didn't expect much, so I was rarely disappointed." I pay tribute to her. All that I hold dear in life has come to me because of my love for her and for the Lord.

Hope of Eternal Life

Happiness comes when scriptures are used in shaping our lives. They speak of the "brightness of hope" (2 Nephi 31:20) for which we yearn. But if our hopes were narrowly confined only to moments in mortality, we should surely be disappointed. Our ultimate hope must be anchored to the atonement of the Lord. He said, "If you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life,

which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7). In addition, President Joseph F. Smith said:

The great truth enunciated by the Savior seems very generally to be lost sight of in this generation, that it will profit a man nothing tho' he should gain the whole world if he lose his own soul.

The standard of success as declared by the word of God, is the salvation of the soul. The greatest gift of God is eternal life. [Juvenile Instructor 39, 15 September 1904, pp. 561–62]

An understanding of that objective should help us approach the future with faith instead of fear (see D&C 6:36), with a more excellent hope in place of despair. With education, your niche in life will be assured. Interests in your family, the Church, and your vocation can be properly balanced. God sent each of us here to be happy and successful (see 2 Nephi 2:25, Jacob 2:18–19).

Meanwhile, he also needs us. We are to "seek not the things of this world but seek . . . first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness" (JST Matthew 6:38). He decreed that "no one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity, being temperate in all things" (D&C 12:8).

Such an individual is President Howard W. Hunter. About two years ago he stood at this pulpit where I now stand. Suddenly he was accosted by an assailant brandishing a briefcase said to contain a bomb. President Hunter exhibited great courage. He didn't give an inch. After the threat was over and peace was restored to the scene, President Hunter delivered his message. It was entitled "An Anchor to the Souls of Men"—a theme similar to mine tonight. I would like to quote from his message because it is especially relevant. President Hunter said:

It is incumbent upon us to rejoice a little more and despair a little less, to give thanks for what we have and for the magnitude of God's blessings to us. . . .

For Latter-day Saints this is a time of great hope and excitement—one of the greatest eras . . . of all dispensations. We need to have faith and hope, two of the greatest fundamental virtues of any discipleship of Christ. We must continue to exercise confidence in God. . . . He will bless us as a people. . . . He will bless us as individuals. . . .

I promise you tonight in the name of the Lord whose servant I am that God will always protect and care for his people. . . . With the gospel of Jesus Christ you have every hope and promise and reassurance. The Lord has power over his Saints and will always prepare places of peace, defense, and safety for his people. When we have faith in God we can hope for a better world—for us personally and for all mankind. . . .

Disciples of Christ in every generation are invited, indeed commanded, to be filled with a perfect brightness of hope. [BYU 1992–93 Devotional and Fireside Speeches (Provo: Brigham Young University, 1993), pp. 70–71]

President Hunter's counsel is timeless.

Tonight, to the youth of the Church, I would like to quote a scripture by way of summary and promise:

Ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a

love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life. [2 Nephi 31:20; see also 2 Nephi 32:3]

Your hope is your "Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel—the God of the whole earth" (3 Nephi 22:5). His hope is in you. You are literally the "Hope of Israel, Zion's army, Children of the promised day" (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 259).

If the apostle Paul were with us tonight, he might choose to bless you as once he did the Romans: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).

As it is my privilege to bear that same apostolic authority, I invoke a blessing upon you, that you may feast upon the words of Christ and apply his teachings in your lives; that success may attend your righteous endeavors; that health, happiness, and a more excellent hope may be yours; that you may endure to the end and enjoy eternal life. I so bless you, consistent with the will of the Lord for each of you. I testify that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and that his church has been restored in these latter days, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.