

**Alma 57:9**1 *Slept upon our swords*

In the October 1987 general conference, I made this statement: “I think we will witness increasing evidence of Satan’s power as the kingdom of God grows stronger. I believe Satan’s ever-expanding efforts are some proof of the truthfulness of this work. In the future the opposition will be both more subtle and more open. It will be masked in greater sophistication and cunning, but it will also be more blatant. We will need greater spirituality to perceive all of the forms of evil and greater strength to resist it.”

Elder Faust, Ensign, Nov. 1987, p. 33

**Alma 57:12**

2 Significantly, Abraham did not see the substitute ram on Mount Moriah until after the moment that mattered, when he obediently “stretched forth his hand, and took the knife. . . .” (Genesis 22:10.) Sometimes the cross must be taken up just that decisively. There is no time for an agonizing appraisal. Neal A. Maxwell, Deposition, p. 76

**Alma 57:19-20**3 *Firm and undaunted*

“You reflect this Church in all you think, in all you say, and in all you do,” President Hinckley told the youth. “Be loyal to the Church and kingdom of God.”...

President Hinckley told the youth that they are “out there as the sons of Helaman in a world that is full of destructive influences.... But if you put your trust in the Almighty and follow the teachings of this Church and cling to it notwithstanding your wounds, you will be preserved and blessed and magnified and made happy.”

Speaking of the world in which they live, President Hinckley told the youth, “You’re in the midst of Babylon. The adversary comes with great destruction. Stand above it, you of the noble birthright. Stand above it.”

Gordon B. Hinckley, “Prophet Grateful for Gospel Testimony,” *Church News*, Sept. 21, 1996, 4.

**Alma 57:21***Obey with exactness*

4 Obedience [is not] a mindless shifting of our personal responsibility. Instead, it is tying ourselves to a living God who will introduce us—as soon as we are ready—to new and heavier responsibilities involving situations of high adventure. Obedience, therefore, is not evasion; it is an invasion—one that takes us deep into the realm of our possibilities.

Neal A. Maxwell, *Experience*, p. 127

5 The same God who gave Mosiah a promise of safety gave the mothers of this untested army the similar promise, on the condition that they would not doubt (Alma 56:47). Even the most caring mothers would not make a promise like that without the confirmation of the Lord. A promise of deliverance such as this, spoken without the inspiration and confirmation of the Spirit, is (at best) a good intention left dangling. But, the sure word spoken through inspiration gave comfort and

hope to the mothers and strength to their sons. At this point the Lamanites were not the enemy, they were the test of obedience—the fire in which these young men would be refined. The only possible enemy to these young warriors would be to waver in their faith in the power of God to deliver them.

K. Douglas Bassett, *Nephi's Freedom Thesis and the Sons of Helaman*, p. 298

6 The stripling warriors not only kept their covenants, but they performed “every word of command with exactness” (Alma 57:21). In other words, they kept their covenants with precision. A half-hearted effort to keep the Sabbath day holy or be morally clean or tell the truth or dress modestly is really no effort at all. Joseph Smith didn’t say that we *sort of* believe in being “honest, true, chaste, benevolent [and] virtuous” (Articles of Faith 1:13). On Mount Sinai the Lord didn’t declare, “Thou shalt not steal—unless you’re in a real bind.” He didn’t say, “Thou shalt *rarely* covet.” He didn’t say, “Thou shalt not commit adultery—very often.” He said, “*Thou shalt not*,” clearly delineating lines we are not to cross....

Men and women who sell their birthright for a mess of pottage will tell you that their demise began with something small, with some seemingly insignificant breach of integrity that escalated. The little things *do* matter.

Sheri Dew, “Living on the Lord’s Side of the Line,” *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 21 Mar. 2000 [Provo, Utah: BYU Press 2000], 4.

7 Who wants the family unit to end at death? Our happiness and joy is in our families. But how do we get this major blessing? Obedience—obedience to the requirements of the restored Church of Jesus Christ. In the Brazil Sao Paulo South Mission there was an Elder Malheiros who entered into the field not being able to read or write very proficiently. He was even a little fearful of giving a prayer in public. But this young man, according to his mission president, Wilford Cardon, became one of the very greatest missionaries imaginable. The president asked him toward the end of his mission how he had turned into such a dynamic, very successful missionary. (He had baptized more than two hundred people and had baptized every week for fifty-two consecutive weeks.) In a very humble manner Elder Malheiros answered, “Well, president, I never doubted you. You said one could baptize every week, so I knew I could baptize every week. I never doubted. It was not always easy, *but I tried to obey*.”... In Alma 57:21 we read about 2060 sons of Helaman who fought valiantly in many wars... Yet not one lost his life because they knew ‘that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them.’ (Alma 56:47). In Alma 57:21 we read: “Yea, and they did *obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness*.’ *They were totally obedient*. Hence, they had unbelievable protection and success.

Teddy E. Brewerton, *Ensign*, May 1981 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981], 69

8 In the late 1970s, as an instructor at the Missionary Training Center, I sat at the feet of Elder Marion D. Hanks while he gave commentary on... [the] concept of obeying with exactness by standing by our leaders. He related a true story shared with him by Elder Hugh B. Brown shortly before the passing of this great apostle, who had served in the Canadian military:

The story is of a young officer in the First World War. He was second-in-command of a cavalry unit. His commanding officer was killed, and he was then summoned and asked if he

could follow orders. He responded that he could. The query was repeated twice, and he answered affirmatively and with some impatience. Of course he could follow orders.

He was then told to lead his troops to the top of a long hillcrest overlooking a deep ravine on the other side. At the crest of the hill he was to turn his troops to the left and at hard gallop proceed for ten minutes by the clock. Nothing was to interfere, no diversions were to distract him; he was to lead his troops without fail at full gallop for ten minutes. He assured the general over the field telephone that he could do this.

The order was given, the troops mounted, the mission begun. At the crest of the hill the young major turned his troops to the left, ordered full gallop, and began the maneuver. Just as he began, he noticed a peculiar sight in a ravine to their right. Some of the bushes seemed to be moving. He paused, took the field glasses, and was electrified to see the enemy in great numbers infiltrating in camouflage up the ravine.

He was a soldier; there was the enemy; the action was plain. His repeated promise to follow orders was forgotten. He stopped his troops, turned them to the right, ordered them to draw sabers, and at full gallop charged his cavalry unit down the ravine to meet the enemy. At exactly ten minutes from the time when he was supposed to begin his full gallop away from the scene, his troops were engaged in a fierce battle with an enemy force. At that moment his own artillery, far back of the lines opened up on the spot and killed every man in the ravine, his own soldiers as well as the enemy.

Allied intelligence had informed the army of enemy infiltration. The major and his cavalry unit were to be the diversion that would keep the enemy coming. They were to be clear of the scene when the artillery delivered its payload and the strong unit of the enemy would be wiped out. As it was, not only that unit but also the young officer along with his men paid the price of his not being able to obey with exactness. (This story was recorded by Elder Hanks' secretary and sent to me in January 1991.)

Elder Hanks did not use this story to illustrate that every order, in every situation, given by every leader, in every army must be obeyed with exactness in order to have the Lord's approval. But he used it to show that the need for total obedience to authority by the sons of Helaman was directly connected to the promise of deliverance given them by their mothers. Deliverance for these young warriors, as well as ourselves, is directly tied to our obedience to those called to preside over us.

Jack R. Christianson and K. Douglas Bassett, *Life Lessons from the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003], 174-175.

- 9 The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God, the devil takes power.  
TPJS, 181.

- 10 When obedience to the Gospel ceases to be an irritant and becomes a quest, in that moment God will endow us with power.  
Ezra Taft Benson

**Alma 57: 25-27**11 *Wounds*

We should look upon this body as something that shall endure in the resurrected state... Be not afraid of soiling its hands; be not afraid of scars that may come to it if won in earnest effort, or in honest fight, but beware of scars that disfigure, that have come to you in places where you ought not have gone, that have befallen you in unworthy undertakings, beware of the wounds of battles in which you have been fighting on the wrong side.

James E. Talmage, Conference Report, October 1913, 117.

**Alma 57: 25-27**12 *Firm and Trust in God*

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

Oh, thus be it ever, when free men shall stand  
 Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!  
 Blest with vict'ry and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land  
 Praise the Pow'r that hath made and preserved us a nation!  
 The Conquer we must, when our cause it is just,  
 And this be our motto: "In God is our trust!"  
 And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave  
 O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!  
 "The Star-Spangled Banner," *Hymns*, 340.

**Alma 57:63**13 *Filled with Joy*

Joy and righteousness are inseparably connected—though Satan would have us believe otherwise, that joy and worldly pleasures are one and the same. But they are not. Likewise, Satan would have us believe that happiness cannot be found in obedience, which he portrays as confining rather than liberating. But that is a lie....

I have never known anyone who was happier or who felt better about themselves or who had greater peace of mind as a result of immorality. Never.

As someone who has remained unmarried two-and-a-half decades beyond a traditional marriageable age, I know something about the challenge of chastity. It is not always easy, but it is far easier than the alternative. Chastity is much easier than regret or the loss of self-respect, than the agony of breaking covenants, than struggling with shallow and failed relationships. This is not to say there are never temptations. Even at forty-six, having long ago decided how I wanted to live my life, I have to be careful all the time. There are things I simply cannot watch, cannot read, cannot listen to because they trigger thoughts and instincts that drive the Spirit away and that edge me too close to the moral line. But those supposed sacrifices are well worth it.

It is so much more comforting to live with the Spirit than without, so much more joyful to have relationships of trust and true friendship than to indulge in a physical relationship that would eventually crumble anyway.

Sheri Dew, "Living on the Lord's Side of the Line," *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 21 Mar 2000 [Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2000], 4