

# But We Heeded Them Not

By Elder David A. Bednar  
*Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles*

*Covenants and ordinances point us to and help us always remember our connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as we progress along the covenant path.*

## Section I

My wife, Susan, our three sons and their wives, all of our grandchildren, and Elder Quentin L. Cook, my seatmate in the Quorum of the Twelve for almost 15 years, all readily will attest to the fact that I do not sing well. But in spite of my lack of vocal talent, I love to sing the hymns of the Restoration. The combination of inspired lyrics and majestic melodies helps me to learn essential gospel principles and stirs my soul.

One hymn that has blessed my life in remarkable ways is “Let Us All Press On.” Recently I have been pondering and learning about a specific phrase in the refrain of that hymn. “*We will heed not* what the wicked may say, but the Lord alone we will obey.”<sup>1</sup>

*We will heed not.*

As I sing “Let Us All Press On,” I often think of the people in Lehi’s vision pressing forward on the path that led to the tree of life who were not merely “clinging to”<sup>2</sup> but were “continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.”<sup>3</sup> Lehi described multitudes in the great and spacious building that were pointing “the finger of scorn at [him] and those ... partaking of the fruit.”<sup>4</sup> His response to the jeers and insults is magnificent and memorable: “*But we heeded them not.*”<sup>5</sup>

I pray that the Holy Ghost will bless and enlighten each of us as we consider together how we can be strengthened to “heed not” the evil influences and mocking voices of the contemporary world in which we live.

## Heed Not

The word *heed* suggests taking notice of or paying attention to someone or something. Thus, the lyrics of the hymn “Let Us All Press On” admonish us to make an affirmative decision to pay no attention to “what the wicked may say.” And Lehi and the people with him who were partaking of the fruit of the tree provide a strong example of not paying attention to the mocking and scorn that so frequently come from the great and spacious building.

The doctrine of Christ written “with the Spirit of the living God ... in fleshy tables of [our hearts]”<sup>6</sup> increases our capacity to “heed not” the many distractions, taunts, and diversions in our fallen world. For example, faith focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ fortifies us with spiritual strength. Faith in the Redeemer is a principle of action and of power. As we act in accordance with the truths of His gospel, we are blessed with the spiritual capacity to press forward through

the challenges of mortality while focusing on the joys the Savior offers to us. Truly, “if we do what’s right we have no need to fear, for the Lord, our helper, will ever be near.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Ryan and Kelly’s Thoughts:**

The combination of inspired lyrics and majestic melodies helps me to learn essential gospel principles and stirs my soul.

We love music and hymns! I remember from a young child always having hymns and music as a part of my childhood. For me, hymns can be so edifying and bring me closer to the Savior. When I was a child and teenager, I really struggled to find friends who understood Heavenly Father and wanted to keep the Spirit with them. I found myself frequently tearful and alone during my time at school/college. I would memorize scriptures and sing hymns to myself while I prayed to not feel alone. When I look back now on those experiences, I am grateful that my parents taught me that when I follow the Saviour, I am never alone and that I could feel His angels near me.

We know that hymns are very important to our Savior and in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. What eternal gospel principles stir your soul as we discuss hymns?

This are all examples from our standards work of the importance of hymns or songs.

Matt 26:27- Right before Gethsemane

And when they had sung an **hymn**, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Doctrine and Covenants 25:12- Organization of the Church

For my soul delighteth in the **song of the heart**; yea, the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me, and it shall be answered with a blessing upon their heads

Doctrine and Covenants 45: 71- End times

And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with **songs of everlasting joy**.

Doctrine and Covenants 101:18

18 They that remain, and are pure in heart, shall return, and come to their inheritances, they and their children, with **songs of everlasting joy**, to build up the waste places of Zion—

Revelation 5: 9 JST

And they sung a **new song**, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Elder Bednar in his talk goes on to explain that he frequently thinks of the prophet Lehi.

1. Pressing forward to the tree of Life versus “clinging”
2. Continually holding fast to the rod of iron
3. Until they came forth and fell down
4. and partook of the fruit of the tree.

2 Ne 31:20 Wherefore, 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.

I pray that the Holy Ghost will bless and enlighten each of us as we consider together how we can be strengthened to “heed not” the evil influences and mocking voices of the contemporary world in which we live.

In 2020 Elder Bednar gave a similar connection with his talk.

2020–O:8, David A. Bednar, We Will Prove Them Herewith Present-Day Proving and Trying

The year 2020 has been marked, in part, by a global pandemic that has proved, examined, and tried us in many ways. I pray that we as individuals and families are learning the valuable lessons that only challenging experiences can teach us. I also hope that all of us will more fully acknowledge the “greatness of God” and the truth that “he shall consecrate [our] afflictions for [our] gain.” 2 Nephi 2:2

Two basic principles can guide and strengthen us as we face proving and trying circumstances in our lives, whatever they may be: (1) the principle of preparation and (2) the principle of pressing forward with a steadfastness in Christ.

### Let Us All Press On

Continuing with Elder Bender: I pray that the Holy Ghost will bless and enlighten each of us as we consider together how we can be strengthened to “heed not” the evil influences and mocking voices of the contemporary world in which we live. And Lehi and the people with him who were partaking of the fruit of the tree provide a strong example of not paying attention to the mocking and scorn that so frequently come from the great and spacious building.

In the Hymn, Let us All Press On- there are two passages listed for the song. There are not linked to the Tree of Life from earlier.

### 1 Nephi 22

15 For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men; for the day soon cometh that all the proud and they who do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day cometh that they must be burned.

16 For the time soon cometh that the fulness of the wrath of God shall be poured out upon all the children of men; for he will not suffer that the wicked shall destroy the righteous.

17 Wherefore, he will preserve the righteous by his power, even if it so be that the fulness of his wrath must come, and the righteous be preserved, even unto the destruction of their enemies by fire. **Wherefore, the righteous need not fear**; for thus saith the prophet, they shall be saved, even if it so be as by fire.

18 Behold, my brethren, I say unto you, that these things must shortly come; yea, even blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke must come; and it must needs be upon the face of this earth; and it cometh unto men according to the flesh if it so be that they will harden their hearts against the Holy One of Israel.

19 For behold, the **righteous shall not perish**; for the time surely must come that all they who fight against Zion shall be cut off.

20 And the **Lord will surely prepare a way for his people**, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet shall be cut off from among the people.

21 And now I, Nephi, declare unto you, that this prophet of whom Moses spake was the Holy One of Israel; wherefore, he shall execute judgment in righteousness.

22 And **the righteous need not fear**, for they are those who shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil, which shall be built up among the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh—

23 For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet.

24 And the time cometh speedily that **the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall**, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory.

25 And he gathered his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture.

26 And **because of the righteousness of his people**, Satan has no power; wherefore, he cannot be loosed for the space of many years; for he hath no power over the hearts of the people, for they dwell in righteousness, and the Holy One of Israel reigneth.

27 And now behold, I, Nephi, say unto you that all these things must come according to the flesh.

28 But, behold, all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people shall dwell safely in the Holy One of Israel if it so be that they will repent.

### **Doctrine and Covenants 6**

33 **Fear not to do good**, my sons, for whatsoever ye sow, that shall ye also reap; therefore, if ye sow good ye shall also reap good for your reward.

34 Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they cannot prevail.

35 Behold, I do not condemn you; go your ways and sin no more; perform with soberness the work which I have commanded you.

36 **look unto me in every thought; doubt not, fear not.**

37 Behold the wounds which pierced my side, and also the prints of the nails in my hands and feet; be faithful, keep my commandments, and ye shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

Elder Bednar gives amazing examples of the rewards that are available to those who press forward. We invite you to carefully consider these questions and promises.

Where in your life does the Lord require you to press forward more?

What about those in your family that rely on your example?  
Are you clinging to anything rather than pressing forward faithfully?  
Have you had any promptings with how you can increase your steadfastness in Christ?

We know the path to the fruit is not easy. You will be mocked, scorned, and pass others who can only cling to the rod because they are holding firm to Babylon. Redeeming Zion requires 150% dedication to pressing forward to Christ. The redemption can only come by those who are sanctified and have reached the Tree of Life. We are promised amazing things and that is why Zion is part of the end-times. We are promised to have no need fear, we shall not perish, the Lord will prepare a way and we shall be led up as calves in the stall. In the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

### **Micah's Thoughts:**

Recently I have been really enjoying these one sentence synopses that are put at the beginning of the talks, but I was surprised that this was the line chosen for this talk. I really enjoyed this talk and I believe it was a well written talk- that being said, this line wasn't my favorite. I feel like there's too much attempted to be squished into a single line here that really needs to be explained and expounded upon. Which is exactly what Elder Bednar did in the talk, he explains a compass and then says in a similar way...This was not a stand alone thought, this was a one line simile to a metaphor that he was teaching and when we don't know or understand the metaphor the one line simile doesn't hold nearly the same weight. I will obviously cover the simile when we get to section 2. The line that I would have chosen is actually found in the first section, "consider together how we can be strengthened to heed not the evil influences and mocking voices of the contemporary world in which we live." And then we answer that question in the talk by teaching and understanding covenants and ordinances and progression along the covenant path. Another line that really could work is "*We will heed not* what the wicked may say, but the Lord alone we will obey." I love Elder Bednar singling out the line "*We will heed not*".

We know per Doctrine and Covenants that "the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me". How often do we pray "Lord we will heed them not"? In a world saturated with voices clamoring for our attention and the workers of iniquity pushing the false narrative of "individual truths" and "not judging" and "every opinion matters" how many of the Saints take the truly unpopular road of "nope, I will heed you not"?

### **Article of Faith 13**

13 We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that 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. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.

### **D&C 90:15**

15 And set in order the churches, and study and learn, and become acquainted with all good books, ....

### **D&C 88:118**

118 And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith.

We are commanded to learn from the best books. We are not told to learn from all books and just take the best parts out of them. We are commanded to learn from the best books. One might say that we are told to “heed the other books not” but what does the Lord mean when he is talking about these books? Clearly the Lord is talking about mathematics, chemistry etc. as well is he not?

### **D&C 109:7, 13-14**

7 And as all have not faith, seek ye diligently and teach one another words of wisdom; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom, seek learning even by study and also by faith;

Ok so we have the Lord once again telling us that we are to learn and to be taught out of the best books but let’s continue to see if the Lord gives us more clues as to what he is actually talking about:

13 And that all people who shall enter upon the threshold of the Lord’s house may feel thy power, and feel constrained to acknowledge that thou hast sanctified it, and that it is thy house, a place of thy holiness.

14 And do thou grant, Holy Father, that all those who shall worship in this house may be taught words of wisdom out of the best books, and that they may seek learning even by study, and also by faith, as thou hast said;

So what do you think? When we are talking about the threshold of the Lord’s house what are we talking about? Or we not talking about the temple? And what do you think the Lord intends to be read in his house? Do you believe that the Lord was referring to chemistry 101 and people learning out of that book in the temple? Better yet, how about this question. What books do you think the Lord desires to be read in the temples? Here’s yet another question, are the Book of Mormon, the Bible etc. single books? Do we know what the definition of the word “bible” is? Bible comes from the Greek word biblia, meaning “little books”. Over time biblia came to describe the whole collection of smaller books that together today make up the Bible. When one is reading out of “the Bible” they aren’t reading out of the best book, they are reading out of the best books (plural).

President Nelson recently committed the Saints to not hearse their doubts with other doubters and a huge theme of this talk is the same thing, “will we heed them not?” Elder Bednar points out that whenever we sing “Let Us Press On” we are in fact making a declaration to “heed not” and we do this most readily by what we choose to consume. Is what we care consuming increasing our faith in Jesus Christ and by faith in Him we obviously know that this is referring to anything that causes us or leads us to repentance and action; for as Elder Bednar taught on another occasion, “faith in centered on the Lord Jesus Christ and *always leads to action*”.

We need to understand that mocking and scorn will come and will come frequently from the great and spacious building. These people don’t produce good fruit. They also refuse to allow



Saints to be “faithful Latter-day Saints” in peace, no, they simply can’t help themselves, they have to mock them and make sure that they are heard by the people they are mocking. Once again, I share this quote by Elder Ballard because it is so important for our day and age:

“Beware of the testimony of one who is intemperate, or irreverent, or immoral, who tears down and has nothing to put in its place.” (In Conference Report, Apr. 1974)

I really love this line “with the Spirit of the living God ... in fleshy tables of [our hearts]” for it is what many in this group have expressed, “fire in my bones”, and this fire comes purely from an understanding of the doctrine of Christ and having it written on our hearts. And I can testify that I know nothing chases away the trolls, nothing chases away the scorn and mocking like that fire can and does. Not only is this a great marriage with President Nelson’s talk “Spiritual Momentum” this is also a perfect marriage to President Nelson’s remarks a few years ago in which he warned, “Difficult days are ahead. Rarely in the future will it be easy or popular to be a faithful Latter-day Saint. Each of us will be tested. The Apostle Paul warned that in the latter days, those who diligently follow the Lord “shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12) That very persecution can either crush you into silent weakness or motivate you to be more exemplary and courageous in your daily lives.... Do whatever it takes to strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ by increasing your understanding of the doctrine taught in His restored Church and by relentlessly seeking truth. Anchored in pure doctrine, you will be able to step forward with faith and dogged persistence and cheerfully do all that lies in your power to fulfill the purposes of the Lord. You will have days when you will be discouraged. So pray for courage not to give up! Sadly, some who you thought were your friends will betray you. And some things will simply seem unfair.” (Face the Future with Faith, The Future of the Church: Preparing the World for the Savior’s Second Coming). Truly there is a concert of clarity developing on these points which should be extremely obvious for anyone who can put these quotes side by side. This is why I am so grateful for this group of Saints of God who “heed not what the wicked say” and have relentlessly sought truth, increasing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by deepening their understanding of the doctrine taught in the Lord’s Church and for which they have been blessed with fire in their bones and an abundance of the Spirit.

## Section II

### A Personal Connection through Covenants

Entering into sacred covenants and worthily receiving priesthood ordinances yoke us with and bind us to the Lord Jesus Christ and Heavenly Father.<sup>8</sup> This simply means that we trust in the Savior as our Advocate<sup>9</sup> and Mediator<sup>10</sup> and rely on His merits, mercy, and grace<sup>11</sup> during the journey of life. As we are steadfast in coming unto Christ and are yoked with Him, we receive the cleansing, healing, and strengthening blessings of His infinite and eternal Atonement.<sup>12</sup>

Living and loving covenant commitments creates a connection with the Lord that is deeply personal and spiritually powerful. As we honor the conditions of sacred covenants and ordinances, we gradually and incrementally are drawn closer to Him<sup>13</sup> and experience the impact of His divinity and living reality in our lives. Jesus then becomes much more than the central character in scripture stories; His example and teachings influence our every desire, thought, and action.

I frankly do not have the ability to describe adequately the precise nature and power of our covenant connection with the resurrected and living Son of God. But I witness that the connections with Him and Heavenly Father are real and are the ultimate sources of assurance, peace, joy, and the spiritual strength that enable us to “fear not, though the enemy deride.”<sup>14</sup> As covenant-making and covenant-keeping disciples of Jesus Christ, we can be blessed to take “courage, for the Lord is on our side”<sup>15</sup> and pay no attention to evil influences and secular scoffing.

As I visit with members of the Church around the world, I often ask them this question: what helps you to “heed not” worldly influences, mocking, and scorn? Their answers are most instructive.

Valiant members often highlight the importance of inviting the power of the Holy Ghost into their lives through meaningful scripture study, fervent prayer, and proper preparation to participate in the ordinance of the sacrament. Also mentioned frequently are the spiritual support of faithful family members and trusted friends, the vital lessons learned through ministering and serving in the Lord’s restored Church, and the capacity to discern the absolute emptiness of anything in or coming from the great and spacious building.

I have noted in these member responses a particular pattern that is especially significant. First and foremost, these disciples have firm testimonies of Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness and the role of Jesus Christ as our Redeemer and Savior. And second, their spiritual knowledge and conviction are individual, personal, and specific; they are not general and abstract. I listen to these devoted souls speak of covenants providing strength to overcome opposition and their connection with the living Lord supporting them through times both good and bad. To these individuals, Jesus Christ indeed is a personal Savior.

Gospel covenants and ordinances operate in our lives much like a compass. A compass is a device used to indicate the cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west for purposes of navigation and geographic orientation. In a similar way, our covenants and ordinances point us to and help us always remember our connection with the Lord Jesus Christ as we progress along the covenant path.

The cardinal direction for all of us in mortality is to come unto and be perfected in Christ.<sup>16</sup> Holy covenants and ordinances help us to keep our focus upon the Savior and strive, with His grace,<sup>17</sup> to become more like Him. Most assuredly, “an unseen [power] will aid me and you in the glorious cause of truth.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Russell’s Thoughts:**

Our baptismal, priesthood and temple covenants embody our connection to the Savior and as we keep them faithfully, we are endowed with power. I have felt the guiding compass of my covenants in my life, and it has drawn me to share the gospel with my friends and neighbors and perform the same sacred ordinances for my ancestors.



*As Elder Bednar testified, “Living and loving covenant commitments creates a connection with the Lord that is deeply personal and spiritually powerful. As we honor the conditions of sacred covenants and ordinances, we gradually and incrementally are drawn closer to Him and experience the impact of His divinity and living reality in our lives. Jesus then becomes much more than the central character in scripture stories; His example and teachings influence our every desire, thought, and action.”*

It is this bond with our Savior through covenants that gives valiant members of the church the power to withstand those mocking voices that would distract us from the very mission we are to be about as disciples of our Savior Jesus Christ. When those voices are compelling or distracting, it is our covenants that keep us grounded. as Elder Bednar suggests, they act as “a compass” pointing us to and helping us always remember our connection with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I find strength through my covenants by studying the word, sincere prayer, daily repentance, keeping the sabbath day holy and attending the temple frequently to perform the work for my ancestors. This work for my ancestors in the temple is one of my greatest sources of strength. As I perform the work for my ancestors it reminds me of the covenants I have made and teaches me what I must do.

President Howard W. Hunter summarized the crucial nature of temple ordinances and covenants:

“In the ordinances of the temple, the foundations of the eternal family are sealed in place. The Church has the responsibility—and the authority—to preserve and protect the family as the foundation of society.

“All of these priesthood temple ordinances are essential for the salvation and exaltation of our Father in Heaven’s children. ...

“All of our efforts in proclaiming the gospel, perfecting the Saints, and redeeming the dead lead to the holy temple. This is because the temple ordinances are absolutely crucial; we cannot return to God’s presence without them” (“A Temple-Motivated People,” Ensign, Mar. 2004, 40, 43).

With so many in society following Satan’s plan to destroy God’s eternal family in our society today it makes the work we are doing in our temples that much more critical.

President Wilford Woodruff stated, “I tell you when the prophets and apostles go to preach to those who are shut up in prison, and who have not received the gospel, thousands of them will there embrace the gospel.

...

“There will be very few, if any, who will not accept the gospel. Jesus, while his body lay in the tomb, went and preached to the spirits in prison, who were destroyed in the days of Noah. After so long an imprisonment, in torment, they doubtless gladly embraced the gospel, and if so they will be saved in the kingdom of God. The fathers of this people will embrace the gospel” (The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, 152, 158).

“The great bulk of those who are in the spirit world for whom the work has been done will receive the truth. The conditions for the spirits of the dead receiving the testimony of Jesus in the spirit world are a thousand times more favorable than they are here in this life” (Millennial Star, Oct. 6, 1893, 718).

I imagine if Wilford Woodruff had seen our day, he would have equally stated that the conditions for the spirits of the dead receiving the testimony of Jesus in the spirit world are now 10 thousand times more favorable than they are here in this life. Satan has almost gotten to the very neck, and we are ripe for destruction. In the face of this despair, I would state boldly that there is hope and joy to be found in the gospel of Jesus Christ and in the promised blessings obtained through righteous covenant keeping. I have often wondered as I performed ordinances in the temple if my ancestors were accepting of the gospel. But I have had too many experiences to doubt that they are readily entering into these covenants and anxiously wait the day in anticipation for us to perform that work for them.

“Elder Ballard sat at our baptismal font [in the Logan Utah Temple] one Saturday while nearly a thousand baptisms were performed for the dead. As he sat there, he contemplated on how great the temple ceremonies were, and how we are bringing special blessings to the living and the dead. His thoughts turned to the spirit world, and he wondered if the people there would accept the work we were doing for them.

“Brother Ballard said: ‘All at once a vision opened to me, and I beheld a great congregation of people gathered in the east end of the font room. One by one, as each name was baptized for, one of these people climbed a stairway over the font to the west end of the room. Not one soul was missing, but there was a person for every one of the thousand names done that day.’

“Brother Ballard said that he had never seen such happy people in all his life, and the whole congregation rejoiced at what was [being] done for them” (Nolan Porter Olsen, *Logan Temple: The First 100 Years* [1978], 170).

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) related an experience he had when he was visited by the spirits of the founding fathers of the United States of America and other early leaders while he served as the first president of the St. George Utah Temple, the first temple completed after the Saints had migrated to the West:

“Two weeks before I left St. George, the spirits of the dead gathered around me, wanting to know why we did not redeem them. Said they, ‘You have had the use of the Endowment House [a temporary structure in Salt Lake City used for performing temple ordinances before the Salt Lake Temple was completed] for a number of years, and yet nothing has ever been done for us. We laid the foundation of the government you now enjoy, and we never apostatized from it, but we remained true to it and were faithful to God.’

“These were the signers of the Declaration of Independence [of the United States of America], and they waited on me for two days and two nights. ...

“I straightway went into the baptismal font and called upon Brother McAllister to baptize me for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and fifty other eminent men, making one hundred in all, including John Wesley, Columbus, and others” (The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, ed. G. Homer Durham [1990], 160–61).

Continued story...

Brothers and Sisters may the glorious unseen power we receive through honest keeping of our covenants, aid me and you in the glorious cause of truth!

### **Micah's Thoughts:**

I appreciate the reference that Elder Bednar places on "Mediator":

### **Doctrine and Covenants 107:19**

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

Elder Bednar's line "living and loving covenant commitments" has a lot more to it than a cursory glance might suggest. Loving our covenant commitments is a reflection of character of one who is perfectly honest. One who is not honest would not love commitments or pledges etc., they would view them as burdens or things of little to no value. The Lord commanded us in **Doctrine and Covenants 136:20**:

20 Seek ye; and keep all your pledges one with another; and covet not that which is thy brother's.

Honesty tied to covenant making makes one a covenant keeping disciple of Christ. This is the first topic we discuss in the School of Joseph's Boys and was one of the confirmations that we received at conference, "courage, for the Lord is on our side" and to pay no attention to evil influences and scoffing.

Elder Bednar also describes a line upon line principle here which is exactly what we are trying to accomplish as we approach Zion becoming one heart and one mind. With that in mind I believe the following scriptures in Doctrine and Covenants 136 tie perfectly into these concepts; people should be able to see and understand the sequence of things taught here- it also ties in perfectly with what we are learning in the Old Testament.

21 Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain, for I am the Lord your God, even the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

22 I am he who led the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; and my arm is stretched out in the last days, to save my people Israel.

23 Cease to contend one with another; cease to speak evil one of another.

24 Cease drunkenness; and let your words tend to edifying one another.

25 If thou borrowest of thy neighbor, thou shalt restore that which thou hast borrowed; and if thou canst not repay then go straightway and tell thy neighbor, lest he condemn thee.

26 If thou shalt find that which thy neighbor has lost, thou shalt make diligent search till thou shalt deliver it to him again.

27 Thou shalt be diligent in preserving what thou hast, that thou mayest be a wise steward; for it is the free gift of the Lord thy God, and thou art his steward.

28 If thou art merry, praise the Lord with singing, with music, with dancing, and with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

29 If thou art sorrowful, call on the Lord thy God with supplication, that your souls may be joyful.

30 Fear not thine enemies, for they are in mine hands and I will do my pleasure with them.

31 My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom.

32 Let him that is ignorant learn wisdom by humbling himself and calling upon the Lord his God, that his eyes may be opened that he may see, and his ears opened that he may hear;

33 For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to enlighten the humble and contrite, and to the condemnation of the ungodly.

Elder Bednar says here that as he talks with members around the world and asks them this question their answers are most instructive. And then he says this “*valiant members...*” He then continues “I have noted in *these* member[s]...” I just want to point out the fact that Elder Bednar is clearly without any shadow of doubt making clear reference to a select group of members in the Church who are valiant. So what does that mean? This means that Elder Bednar judged the membership and in his judgement one of his key observations was that among these valiant members their spiritual knowledge and convictions were real and specific, not general or abstract. They believe in the literal and plain interpretation, they have the faith of the brother of Jared, they have the correct understanding of faith as taught in the Lectures on Faith. This judgment and discernment between the wheat and the tares is important and comes into fruition by the time he hits the footnotes at #16. In these footnotes we are taught of this very real dichotomy and what both groups look like.

### **3 Nephi 12:20**

20 Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

### **Moroni 10:32–33**

32 Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and

strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

33 And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot.

The Lord continues this important teaching in **D&C 84:43-53**

43 And I now give unto you a commandment to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life.

44 For you shall live by every word that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God.

45 For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

46 And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit.

47 And every one that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit cometh unto God, even the Father.

48 And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you, which is confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world.

49 And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin.

50 And by this you may know they are under the bondage of sin, because they come not unto me.

51 For whoso cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin.

52 And whoso receiveth not my voice is not acquainted with my voice, and is not of me.

53 And by this you may know the righteous from the wicked, and that the whole world groaneth under sin and darkness even now.

## Section III

### Holding Fast to the Iron Rod

Our covenant connection with God and Jesus Christ is the channel through which we can receive the capacity and strength to “heed not.” And this bond is strengthened as we continually hold fast to the rod of iron. But as Nephi’s brethren asked, “What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw ... ?

“And [Nephi] said unto them that it was the *word of God*; and whoso would hearken unto *the word of God*, and would *hold fast unto it*, they would never perish; neither could the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary overpower them unto blindness, to lead them away to destruction.”<sup>19</sup>

Please note that the ability to resist the temptations and the fiery darts of the adversary is promised to those individuals who “hold fast to” rather than merely “cling to” the word of God.

Interestingly, the Apostle John described Jesus Christ as the Word.<sup>20</sup>

“In the beginning was *the Word*, and *the Word* was with God, and *the Word* was God. ...

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. ...

“And *the Word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, one of the names of Jesus Christ is “The Word.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the [eighth article of faith](#) states, “We believe the Bible to be *the word of God* as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be *the word of God*.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, the teachings of the Savior, as recorded in the holy scriptures, also are “the word.”

Let me suggest that holding fast to the word of God entails (1) remembering, honoring, and strengthening the personal connection we have with the Savior and His Father through the covenants and ordinances of the restored gospel and (2) prayerfully, earnestly, and consistently using the holy scriptures and the teachings of living prophets and apostles as sure sources of revealed truth. As we are bound and “hold fast” to the Lord and are transformed by living His doctrine,<sup>24</sup> I promise that individually and collectively we will be blessed to “stand in holy places, and shall not be moved.”<sup>25</sup> If we abide in Christ, then He will abide in and walk with us.<sup>26</sup> Surely, “in the days of trial his Saints he will cheer, and prosper the cause of truth.”<sup>27</sup>

## Testimony

Press on. Hold fast. Heed not.

I witness that fidelity to the covenants and ordinances of the Savior’s restored gospel enables us to *press on* in the work of the Lord, to *hold fast* to Him as the Word of God, and to *heed not* the allurements of the adversary. In the fight for right, may each of us wield a sword, even “the mighty sword of truth,”<sup>28</sup> in the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

### Brandon’s Thoughts:

Here Elder Bednar relates how important it is to “heed not” to temptations or anything that might loosen our grip or prevent us from “holding fast”. There are several great examples of this but the example of Joseph son of Jacob really sticks out here. Genesis 39:9-10 We read that Potiphar’s wife routinely tempted Joseph to commit grievous sin but that he “hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. Elder Bednar rightly points out that one needs “capacity and strength” to do this. Wonderfully, this is a somewhat cyclical concept where doing one thing empowers our ability to do another and we gain more ability to do the first thing even better than before! For example the ability to “heed not” is greatly strengthened when we humble ourselves unto God that He may make weak things strong unto us. This is in fact one of my very favorite scriptures and was put on my missionary plaque. The one and only Ether 12:27

And if men come unto me I will show unto them their [weakness](#). I [give](#) unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my [grace](#) is sufficient for all men that [humble](#) themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make [weak](#) things become strong unto them.



So if we come unto God and allow Him to show us our weaknesses so that we may be humble, those very weak things we each have will be exchanged for strengths. Bednar says that our bond is thus strengthened! Then our ability to hold fast grows even stronger.

This is key as we understand that the “word of God” as mentioned here is both the Savior Himself and the word as contained in the scriptures, or, the actual words the Savior has spoken to us. The instructions He has given to us to study, treasure, hearken unto and apply fully in our lives. Holding Fast to the Iron Rod is to become fully acquainted with the words of the scriptures, to be totally diligent in seeking to obtain the words of the scriptures. To study them and have the Holy Ghost teach us what they mean and then how to apply them. To actually have a full knowledge of the scriptures and what they tell us to do in broad and specific terms. Once we have obtained the word by diligently studying the scriptures we can receive the Word Himself. This process of diligently studying, and then actually doing the words of the scriptures qualifies us to be able to stand in the presence of the Lord. This is the ultimate goal and the culmination of our Father in Heaven’s plan of happiness. To be worthy of the companionship of the Lord Himself, to have our calling and election made sure, and to receive of the blessings of the Second Comforter. This results in our overcoming the world, overcoming Satan, and receiving our Exaltation.

So it’s 2 concepts! In holding fast to the Iron Rod we hold fast to the written word (are obedient to the words of the scriptures) and we hold fast to the Savior Himself. If we diligently seek Him, we shall find Him. Proverbs 7:15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.

As a final note the 5 keys we received from a talk given last conference by President Nelson regarding spiritual momentum is instructive and will help us continue to hold fast.

- 1st. Get on the covenant path and stay there.
- 2nd. Discover the joy of daily repentance.
- 3rd. Learn about God and how he works.
- 4th. Seek and expect miracles.
- 5th. End conflict in your personal life.

### **Genesis 39: 9-10**

**9** *There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou *art* his wife: how then can I do this great [<sup>a</sup>wickedness](#), and [<sup>b</sup>sin](#) against God?*

**10** *And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph [<sup>a</sup>day](#) by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, *or* to be with her.*

## **Micah's Thoughts:**

Elder Bednar starts with honesty and covenants and concludes his talk in this section “holding fast to the iron rod.” In the School of Joseph’s Boys we know we have to have as our foundation and great unifier an understanding of honesty and covenants, light of Christ vs Holy Ghost and the pyramid of truth- this simply being the order by which revelation and doctrine flows to the children of men. An important detail that we should also note is the synonymous nature in which covenants and promises are used both doctrinally and scripturally. Nephi was asked “Rememberest thou the covenants of the Father unto the house of Israel?” The Lord then said to Nephi in **2 Nephi 29:1-2**,

1 But behold, there shall be many—at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I may remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may set my hand again the second time to recover my people, which are of the house of Israel;

2 And also, that I may remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that I would remember your seed; and that the words of your seed should proceed forth out of my mouth unto your seed; and my words shall hiss forth unto the ends of the earth, for a standard unto my people, which are of the house of Israel;

Based off of these sets of scriptures it should be easier for us to see these connections. When we covenants with God we promise to do certain things and God promises to do certain things in return. God sets the terms of the covenant and if we seek the blessings we have to fulfill our required promises. If we do not fulfill our promises the Lord cannot bless us. This should have added meaning to us knowing the time period we are in and having the prophet of God recently tell us to seek to better understand the promises made to the house of Israel- promises that we only have access to via covenant making and covenant keeping. Elder Bednar then proceeds to help us to visualize the connection between holding fast to the iron rod which is the word of God and the Word being Christ. Ergo when one is holding fast to the scriptures that is their connection to holding fast to Christ the person, which is what we learned when we read D&C 84 above- when we read the word we can testify that we have heard his voice. This also makes me think of a recent experience that I had this week listening and participating in the School of Joseph's Boys classes- for which I can't express my appreciation for these classes and you Saints enough... THANK YOU! Here is what I was taught by the Spirit:

"Endure to the end"

It is a phrase I've never really enjoyed, I've never really liked, because "end" seems so void, empty, etc... Learning and talking about the Second Comforter again tonight the correct thought was put forth again- that is that "our every desire once we become members should be to obtain the Second Comforter" and then something hit me...

"Endure to the End"

## Revelation 22

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Our job is to "endure to THE END", but "the End" isn't a destination, "the End" is a person...

We should always understand that the covenants we make, the scriptures we have, etc. are all things that are to lead us back to the tree in Lehi's vision, a tree in which the fruit is "the love of God" and we know "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I would like to end my thoughts tonight with the same testimony as Elder Bednar, that I know we must base our understanding and teaching of the doctrine using the holy scriptures and the teachings of living oracles- they are sure sources of revealed truth. We have to have that knowledge, and then press on, hold fast and heed not. As Joseph Smith taught us,

"Contend earnestly for the like precious faith with the Apostle Peter, "and add to your faith virtue," knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity; "for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Another point, after having all these qualifications, he lays this injunction upon the people "to make your calling and election sure." He is emphatic upon this subject—after adding all this virtue, knowledge, etc., "Make your calling and election sure." What is the secret—the starting point? "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." How did he obtain all things? Through the knowledge of Him who hath called him. There could not anything be given, pertaining to life and godliness, without knowledge. Woe! woe! woe to Christendom!—especially the divines and priests if this be true." TPJS, p. 305

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.