

# ***“The Lord Has Beheld Our Sacrifice, Come after Us”***

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I love being here with you sisters. You are noble women. And you’re here to be guided and strengthened and blessed through this conference. As I talk about dedicated, noble women today, I think each of you could share one of your stories as an example to everyone here. I feel very blessed being here with you and being strengthened by you. Thank you.

About a year ago, my parents had just completed a three-year mission in the Family History Department, bought a new little home nestled in the shadow of the Jordan River temple, and were starting to settle in. Standing in the midst of unpacked boxes one afternoon, my dad answered a telephone call. It was President Gordon B. Hinckley, who delightedly told my dad he had a great new assignment for him. He was calling him to be the president of the Nauvoo temple. As a family, we were in shock, not because our parents weren’t worthy for the call, but more because we hadn’t thought we were going to have yet another opportunity to share our parents with the rest of the Church.

Within a few weeks, my parents were gone, leaving behind unpacked belongings, new furnishings, children, grandchildren, and a family room view of the Jordan River temple soon to be replaced by a family room view of the Nauvoo temple. Really, the most important thing they left behind was the legacy of sacrifice and service that have graced their lives.

Our families have been blessed by their service. It's not that we have been without struggles, but Heavenly Father has cared for us through these. Certainly the greatest blessing may simply be the dedicated example of our parents' devotion. They have modeled for us the way to help build the Lord's earthly kingdom.

Somehow the call to serve and sacrifice for Nauvoo seemed appropriate. The entire early history of that city is one of sacrifice. Just as my parents left a new home and many of their belongings behind, so did the Saints leave behind their homes and belongings as they left Nauvoo for the trek to the unknown west.

The Saints knew they needed the blessings of the temple to strengthen them for the ordeal of their journey in the wilderness. They needed their temple covenants to protect them and help them endure their afflictions. Hundreds of worthy people flocked to the Nauvoo Temple in the winter of 1846. Even when Brigham Young encouraged them to begin their exodus, they could not bear to leave. He said, "Notwithstanding that I had announced that we would not attend to the administration of the ordinances, the House of the Lord was thronged all day, the anxiety being so great to receive. . . . I walked some distance from the Temple supposing the crowd would disperse, but on returning I found the house filled to overflowing. Looking upon the multitude and knowing their anxiety, as they were thirsting and hungering for the word, we continued at work diligently in the House of the Lord."<sup>1</sup> This tender scene of Brother Brigham returning to administer to his anxious brothers and sisters reminds me of the account in 3 Nephi 17 of the Savior compassionately tarrying with the Nephite multitude.

Think what the early Saints sacrificed to make these temple covenants. Before they left that winter, they inscribed in gold capital letters on the wall of the assembly hall of the temple, "THE LORD HAS BEHELD OUR SACRIFICE, COME AFTER US."<sup>2</sup> They had sacrificed everything to build this temple and to make these covenants. They hoped that others would follow. Covenant making and covenant keeping require sacrifice on our part but in return bless us more richly than our efforts merit. King Benjamin taught: "If ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. . . . All that he requires of you is to keep his commandments; . . . [then] he doth bless you and prosper you" (Mosiah 2:21–22).

As I've watched my parents serve faithfully time and time again, and as I've thought of the faith and endurance of the early Saints, I have wondered what characterizes such people.

The people in the City of Enoch and the people of Fourth Nephi lived in perfect societies. They repented of their sins, they were baptized, and they received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Like my parents and like the early Saints, they were covenant-making and covenant-keeping people. They were happy, because the love of God did dwell in their hearts. This love of God, or charity, is the transforming love *from* God, an indebted love *for* God, and love for each other *like* God loves.

I believe that a perfect society begins with perfecting individuals. President Howard W. Hunter said, “The key to a unified Church is a unified soul—one that is at peace with itself and not given to inner conflicts and tensions.”<sup>3</sup> We make our baptismal and temple covenants personally and individually. And as we individually keep those covenants, we bless the societies of which we are a part.

I am convinced that we as women have the ability to be that unified soul who can help to unify the Church and strengthen our communities. Eliza R. Snow said, “It is the duty of each one of us to be a holy woman. . . . There is no sister so isolated, and her sphere so narrow but what she can do a great deal towards establishing the kingdom of God upon the earth.”<sup>4</sup> We are women of covenant, which means we strengthen our families, bless our ward families, unify presidencies, and build righteous communities.

Today I would like to share several examples of influential righteous women. Theirs is a model we can follow. Their dedicated lives resound with the Nauvoo temple phrase, “The Lord has beheld our sacrifice, come after us.”

First, when the people of Ammon were converted to the Lord, they made an oath that they would never again kill, not even to defend themselves. Yet, as the Ammonites witnessed the “afflictions and tribulations” the Nephites went through to protect them, they were tempted to break their oath to help those who were defending their liberty. But Helaman “feared lest by so doing they should lose their souls” (Alma 53:15). So, instead, they sent to war their two thousand sons, who had not made such an oath.

In just a few telling scriptures we learn much about this group of people who were truly converted to the gospel. Covenants were binding and meaningful. They made them and they kept them. They taught their children to do the same.

Both fathers and mothers blessed these young men. The fathers of the stripling warriors helped supply needs for the soldiers: “There was brought unto us many provisions from the fathers of those my two thousand sons” (Alma 56:27). The mothers provided spiritual sustenance. They taught them faith, courage, and obedience. “Now

they never had fought, yet they did not fear death; . . . they had been taught by their mothers, that if they did not doubt, God would deliver them. And they rehearsed unto me the words of their mothers, saying: We do not doubt our mothers knew it” (Alma 56:47–48). “Yea, and they did obey and observe to perform every word of command with exactness” (Alma 57:21).

This story models for us the pattern for families today. The Proclamation on the Family says: “By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners.”<sup>5</sup>

I am grateful for the lessons we learn from the Ammonites about diligent fathers, nurturing mothers, and faithful children who kept their covenants with exactness and blessed the whole Nephite nation both temporally and spiritually. These stripling warriors, having “beheld the sacrifice” of their parents, chose to “come after [them].”

Next let’s look at the home environment of Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Restoration. His was a home where he learned values that taught him how to find solutions to life’s questions.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton said about the Smith home, “Love of God and the unwavering knowledge of God’s existence were part of Joseph’s education in a spiritual home. . . . Joseph saw his parents kneeling in prayer; he knew his mother went to a grove to petition the Lord; he felt the love of the Lord in his home. The family read the Bible, sang hymns, and discussed the scriptures together.”<sup>6</sup>

Through the years Joseph learned by example and teaching that his parents turned to the Lord with each difficulty. Lucy Mack Smith writes of her reaction when her sister died:

“The grief occasioned by the death of Lovina was preying upon my health. . . .

“In the midst of this anxiety of mind, I determined to obtain . . . a change of heart.

“To accomplish this I spent much of my time reading the Bible and praying.”<sup>7</sup>

In addition Joseph saw his mother retire to a grove to pray for solace, and he saw both parents fall to their knees in supplication for his ten-year-old sister Sophronia as she lay dying. “Under the tutelage of their father the family studied the scriptures together and were led by him in family prayer.”<sup>8</sup>

When Joseph questioned which church was right, he knew to search the scriptures and to pray. He had been taught in his home by precept and example. He also found refuge, acceptance, love, and belief when he returned to his home after his first miraculous vision. Here was a model home, not one without problems but one where the family coped with the problems in model ways. Joseph “beheld the sacrifice” of his parents and “came after [them].”

Finally, each of us has in our own histories the stories of righteous women who influence generations. My husband’s third great-grandmother Elizabeth Haven Barlow was such a woman. Her experiences spanned most of the events of early Church history. She was introduced to the gospel in Massachusetts by her cousins Brigham Young and Willard Richards. After studying the Book of Mormon, she was baptized and soon joined the body of Saints in Far West, Missouri.

With other Saints she endured the persecutions and expulsions in Missouri and Nauvoo. Her testimony sustained her. She said, “We all felt more sorrowful at seeing Apostles leave the Church than we did over our trials and persecutions.”<sup>9</sup>

Her experiences were difficult: she bore a child as she crossed the plains; her six-year-old child was kidnapped by Indians; she struggled for survival when her husband was sent on a mission; and—get this—she served as Relief Society president for thirty-one years.

Her daughter writes this about her mother: “To mother the Gospel had meant everything. No sacrifice was too great. . . . She dug sego roots and thistles . . . while her husband was on his mission and she would have done it again had it been necessary. Nothing stirred her soul more than repeating the events she had passed through in Missouri and Nauvoo. The Gospel, coupled with seeing her family live righteously, was the joy of her life.”<sup>10</sup>

Her daughter closes the biography with this promise from the book of Revelation: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? . . . These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. . . . They shall hunger no more, neither [shall they] thirst . . . : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 7:13–14, 16–17).

With each of these women, “the Lord has beheld [their] sacrifice,” and we are invited—in fact, it is our duty—to “come after [them].” President Spencer W. Kimball said: “To be a righteous woman is a glorious thing in any age. To be a righteous woman

during the winding up scenes on the earth, before the second coming of our Savior, is an especially noble calling. The righteous woman's strength and influence today can be tenfold what it might be in more tranquil times. She has been placed here to help to enrich, to protect, and to guard the home—which is society's basic and most noble institution. Other institutions in society may falter and even fail, but the righteous woman can help to save the home, which may be the last and only sanctuary some mortals know in the midst of storm and strife."<sup>11</sup> The mothers of the stripling warriors, the mother of the Prophet Joseph, and my husband's great-great-great-grandmother Elizabeth Haven Barlow enriched, protected, and guarded the home. Sisters, what a wonderful privilege and trust are ours as women in the winding-up scenes on the earth to save the sanctuary of the home!

Let me conclude with a modern-day example of a dear friend who influenced her family and strengthened her community. Several years ago her eldest daughter got married. It was a perfect temple wedding with loving family members, warm, Indian-summer weather, and a beautiful and happy couple. After the ceremony the family took photos and had a family luncheon, and then they all hurried from Salt Lake to Provo to prepare for a wedding reception that evening.

About half an hour before it was to begin, everything was ready—except that the caterer hadn't come. She was responsible for the tablecloths, the wedding cake, and all the refreshments. Helpful friends called her business and her home and left desperate messages. Someone drove to her business, but it was all locked up. Friends in the ward rallied and found tablecloths for the tables and flowers for centerpieces. They bought a small cake from the grocery store and decorated it with flowers and even offered to buy refreshments. The family declined this kind offer, because by this time guests had arrived.

As people came through the line, my friend gave a simple apology about the lack of refreshments and concentrated instead on celebrating the marriage of this wonderful young couple. Even so, the no-show caterer became quite the topic of conversation, especially among the men at the party. They figured that the bride's father had planned for this fiasco with the caterer so he wouldn't have the expense of refreshments. But the party went on, and we learned an astonishing thing about a Mormon reception. You don't have to eat to have fun! We all had a glorious time that night focusing on the things and the people who mattered most.

After most of the guests and family members had left, the caterer rushed in with an ashen face. She was absolutely grief-stricken that she had made such a terrible mistake. She had written down the wrong day on her calendar. Never before had she done this. My friend reached out and hugged her. “Don’t even worry,” she said. “We’re just grateful you are all right. We were worried that something terrible had happened to you. We had a wonderful time tonight, so no harm is done for either of us.” My friend was not feigning love or forgiveness; she truly felt it.

Her example taught many of us so much. Think what retaliation and anger could have cost the caterer and her business. Think what a mother’s decision to celebrate the wedding rather than worry about the refreshments taught her daughter about what is important. Think what she taught all of us about the power of the pure love of God. Let me quote to you some of what the caterer wrote to her two days later.

“I find myself with extra time today . . . since I haven’t a wedding to serve tonight as I had planned. First and foremost, once again, please accept my deepest regrets for Thursday evening. In our ten-year history, I have never created such a disaster as I did for you and your family. Words cannot express the hours of agony I have grilled myself with as I have pondered the evening and what you must have felt. I want to make some sort of restitution for these damages and I hope you will help me create that situation. . . . I am so sorry.

“I also wanted to tell you of the profound experience this has been for me from an eternal perspective. In my life, I have never been treated with such Christ-like love and compassion as you did that night. Your first impulse was to embrace me, and to comfort me, when I should have been consoling you! You were not waiting with wrath and anger at my mistake, but rather with love and understanding—as I have always hoped Heavenly Father would be waiting for me. You knew, without asking, the intents of my heart. Over the years, I have dealt with petty complaints (‘I didn’t like the color of the punch!,’ etc.). You had every justification to be angry, and yet you chose a higher road. Since that night, my mind has continually returned to a central theme . . . ‘go and do likewise as you have been forgiven.’ My way has been kinder and gentler with my children, my husband, and my staff. When their work has fallen short of my expectations, I have looked on the intent of their hearts rather than their shortcomings. I am sorry this lesson came to me at your expense, but it is one that will be with me forever. Thank you for your loving example of the higher road.”<sup>12</sup>

My friend's righteous actions enriched a whole society that night. I have witnessed in the scriptures, in our history, and in our communities the influence of righteous women. "It is the duty of each one of us to be a holy woman . . . [that we may] do a great deal towards establishing the kingdom of God upon the earth."<sup>13</sup> I know Heavenly Father loves each one of us. He is counting on us and blessing us to succeed in this noble effort. With each of these examples, as with my own parents as they headed for Nauvoo, I seem to see engraved in their lives in gold capital letters a summons for each of us, "THE LORD HAS BEHELD OUR SACRIFICE, COME AFTER US." I pray that we will follow in their devoted path. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed. rev., 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932–51), 7:579.

<sup>2</sup> Heidi S. Swinton, *Sacred Stone: The Temple at Nauvoo* (American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications, 2002), 136.

<sup>3</sup> Howard W. Hunter, "That We May Be One," *Ensign*, May 1976, 106.

<sup>4</sup> Eliza R. Snow, "An Address," *Woman's Exponent*, 15 September 1873, 62; see also *LDS Women's Treasury: Insights and Inspiration for Today* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1997), 415.

<sup>5</sup> "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, November 1995, 102.

<sup>6</sup> Marvin J. Ashton, *Ye Are My Friends* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1972), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 30–31.

<sup>8</sup> James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 21.

<sup>9</sup> Israel Barlow Family Association, *Biography of Elizabeth Haven Barlow* (July 1958), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Barlow, *Biography*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Spencer W. Kimball, "Privileges and Responsibilities of Sisters," *Ensign*, November 1978, 103.

<sup>12</sup> Letter in possession of Christina Parkinson.

<sup>13</sup> Snow, "Address," 62.