"Our Prayer for Our Granddaughters"

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Elder Neil L. Andersen:

President Thomas S. Monson once began a talk to a conference of women in this way: "I realize that as a man I am in the minority [in this audience]. ... I feel much the same as the shy country cousin who came to visit his relative in a large cosmopolitan city. He had not [visited his relatives] for some years and was startled when a young boy answered the ringing of the doorbell. The lad asked him in; and after they were comfortably seated, he inquired, 'Who are you, anyway?'

"The visitor answered, 'I'm a cousin on your father's side,' whereupon the boy replied, 'Mister, in this house, that puts you on the wrong side!"

President Monson continued, "I trust ...in this house, I might be found on the right side, even the Lord's side." 1

This is a special kind of conference. No one attends because her mother requires it. Well, perhaps some of you in your 40s with your mother by your side are an exception. Truthfully, those who attend this conference or watch the delayed broadcast are devoted disciples of Christ, filled with deep purpose and faith. You are here seeking added strength for today and for the days ahead. I know you have received much from what you have learned during the past two days. I am humbled and honored to stand before you. I have come today by assignment of the First Presidency. I pray that the Spirit of the Lord will be with us, and that you might receive the further answers and confirmations you are seeking.

President Packer likes to say: "Young men speak of the future because they have no past, old men speak of the past because they have no future."

Today I speak as an old man, but I speak of the future. As members of the Quorum of the Twelve, we are to be watchmen on the tower, sounding a warning trumpet that all may hear.³ Because of where we stand, we are to see afar off, and give voice to the dangers ahead.

If you will listen closely today, you will hear a joyful sound from my trumpet. To the righteous, it will be a sound of gladness, of optimism, and of wonderful anticipation for the future.

The theme of our conference comes from the writings of Nephi as he observed the latter-days of the earth prior to the second coming of the Savior. Like many before and after him, Nephi describes this as a time of wickedness and abominations,⁴ a time when hearts are hardened and minds are blinded toward spiritual truths.⁵ It parallels President Monson's comments that our days are moving away "from that which is spiritual... [with] the winds of change [swirling] around us and the moral fiber of society [continuing] to disintegrate before our very eyes."

Wickedness will not diminish as we move toward the final scenes before the Savior's glorious return. Nephi prophesies that the adversary will have "dominion over all the earth, among all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people."

But in the very same verses that speak of these difficulties, Nephi also prophesies of great blessings and the ultimate victory that will come for the righteous. The angel told Nephi that all of this would occur during a time when "the Lamb of God…[is working]…a marvelous…and everlasting [work]" and when He is manifesting Himself in word and in power, bringing peace and eternal life.⁹

The angel showed Nephi "the church of the Lamb of God." Their numbers were few, but they were "upon all the face of the earth." In the last few weeks, new stakes have been approved not only in the centers of strength of North and South America but also in Asia, the South Pacific, the Caribbean, Africa, and deep in the Amazon forest of Brazil. The day will come when we will honestly be able to declare that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is upon all the face of the earth.

Nephi described those belonging to the Church as "the saints of God" and the "covenant people of the Lord." The scriptures say that they too had dominions (or places they influence), but they were described as being "small," perhaps meaning principally in their homes, their families, and places closely surrounding them.

In describing these events, Brigham Young said: "It was revealed to me in the commencement of this Church, that the Church would spread, prosper, grow and extend, and that in proportion to the spread of the Gospel among the nations of the earth, so would the power of Satan rise." ¹²

To live our mortality at this time is a great privilege. These are great days of destiny and you are an important part in the unfolding events that are occurring and will occur in preparation for the Savior's return.

The angel showed Nephi multitudes of the earth in the "large and spacious building" of Lehi's dream, who had "gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb." ¹³

One evening soon after my call to the Quorum of the Twelve, my wife Kathy commented, "Neil, I read a verse today in 1 Nephi, Chapter 11, that speaks of many who are gathered together to fight against the Twelve Apostles of the Lamb." She continued, "I've read that verse many times in the past, but today it seemed so personal and it frightened me."

We sometimes imagine this as physical conflict. The scriptures affirm that there will be "wars and rumors of wars" upon the earth. They will worsen in the years ahead.

But the physical conflicts will not be our greatest challenge. The spiritual war that is raging for the souls of men and women is much more daunting, with consequences of greater significance.

We recognize the enemy and understand his plan. Nephi said that those of the "great and spacious building," represent the world, and specifically the pride and wisdom of the world.¹⁵

The pride of the world seeks to destroy faith by casting doubt on the existence of God or, if not His existence, His personal care and concern for His children. It has been a tactic of the adversary since ancient times. Remember the words of Korihor, "I do not deny the existence of a God, but I do not believe that there is a God; and I say also, that ye do not know that there is a God; and except ye show me a sign, I will not believe." Does that sound familiar? To the world, the promise of a Savior and the doctrine of Christ is a "foolish tradition."

Nephi describes the large and spacious building as being "vain imaginations." One imagines that his or her own wisdom, own abilities are sufficient, never acknowledging that all he is, all that she has, is dependent upon the goodness of the Father, who is God. Vain because one believes the world centers around "me". Imaginations because it is so distant from reality. Korihor once again: "Every man [fares] in this life according to the management of the creature; ...every [woman prospers] according to [her] genius, and ... every man [conquers] according to his strength." 19

The prophet Jacob added these insights: "When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves." ²⁰

Describing the United States, Ross Douthat said in a *New York Times* editorial earlier this month: "We're neither traditionally Christian nor straightforwardly secular. Instead, we are a nation of heretics in which most people still associate themselves with Christianity but revise its doctrines as they see fit, and nobody can agree on even the most basic definitions of what Christian faith should mean." Many have called this the doctrine of cafeteria Christianity, choosing and discarding doctrine because of personal preference.

Riches can also have a part in the pride of the world. Nephi said that the manner of the dress of those in the spacious building was exceedingly fine.²² Jacob describes those whose "hearts are upon their treasures; ...[whose] treasure is their god."²³

The spiritual battle rages because those who have chosen wickedness, darkness, and self-conceit, are never happy to go their way alone. They form unholy alliances with what Paul calls the principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places, ²⁴ determined to take others with them. Nephi explains that they are characterized by scoffing voices, and mocking and pointing fingers. ²⁵ Jacob adds that "they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek."

And thus, while wanting us all, they especially pursue the young, the unsure, the undisciplined, and the weak, hoping to destroy any "hope of Christ" in the fragile and vulnerable. You are on

the battlefield, right in the crossfire. The conflict will not diminish, but intensify in the years ahead. How will we, how will you withstand the attack?

The prospects could seem bleak without the power and promises of our Heavenly Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. The promise of God to us is the theme of this conference.

"And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb, and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth; and they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory."²⁸

As you arm yourself for battle, your protection comes from God who is our Father.

You have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and take His name upon you. You are commissioned as a disciple of Christ, a defender of the faith. You have heard the words of Paul during the past two days: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand...

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench [it doesn't just say deflect, it says quench] all the fiery darts of the wicked.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." 29

You are to be armed with "righteousness and the power of God in great glory." 30

When you are armed with "righteousness and the power of God in great glory," it is because something is happening inside of you, as well as the outward, public display of your discipleship. Your belief in Christ and your love for Him fills your soul. We sometimes refer to this as conversion.

Speaking nearly 50 years ago, Elder Marion G. Romney, who served in the First Presidency, explained: "Membership in the Church and conversion are not necessarily synonymous. Being converted...and having a testimony are not necessarily the same thing either. A testimony comes when the Holy Ghost give the earnest seeker a witness of the truth. A moving testimony vitalizes faith; that is, it induces repentance and obedience to the commandments. Conversion...is the fruit of, or the reward for, repentance and obedience." Conversion is a process, and usually requires an extended time of righteousness.

Jesus said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." 32

We sometimes use descriptive phrases with the word converted; for example, fully converted or completely converted. The best description I know is found in the Book of Mormon where we learn that when the Lamanites "were converted unto the Lord, they never did fall away." ³³ Conversion requires daily nourishment and renewal.

In one of Elder Neal A. Maxwell's last essays, written just shortly before his passing, he said, "We use the words *baptism*, *testimony*, and *conversion* carelessly, even interchangeably. Yet baptism is an *event*, whereas conversion is a *process*.

"There can be baptism without testimony. There can be testimony without engaging in the process of becoming even as Jesus is (see 3 Nephi 27:27), but there cannot be conversion without testimony and without baptism by fire and water (see D&C 33:11)."³⁴

Think about the journey of your own conversion and discipleship through the years. When you are more sensitive in taking His name upon you, seeking the spiritual gifts from his sacred ordinances, and giving added care to following Him, you feel greater strength. You see more clearly, sense more deeply your identity as a daughter of God, and realize in greater measure the purposes you have accomplished, are accomplishing, and will yet accomplish.

Armed with righteousness, the Lord's power through the Gift of the Holy Ghost is magnified and elevated in you. Angels and miracles surround you. You are armed with the power of God in great glory. Happiness and peace follow even in times of difficulty. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." 35

We are so grateful for who you are, and for your devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and His work upon the earth. Daily we see your influence for good upon your families, friends, and others who come into your path. Thank you. Thank you for who you are, and who you are becoming. "In the strength of the Lord" you do not give up. "We are <u>all</u> enlisted till the conflict is over." 36

I testify to you that God our Father is a God of miracles. We know something that is almost never known in a raging war. We know that victory is assured. Nephi testifies: "And it came to pass that I saw and bear record, that the great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb."³⁷

To my Kathy, and to each of you, I assure you that while the battle rages, we need not fear. The Lord will help you, your family, and others you love who need special help. We know the outcome. The Savior will triumph over all!

Hold tight to King Benjamin's declaration: "There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent." 38

Let me emphasize: You are absolutely critical to this cause! We sometimes like to separate ourselves into groups: men and women, married and single, old and young, rich and poor. The list goes on and on. We wonder about our place—where do we fit.

I pray that the importance of this noble cause will allow less thinking of differences, and more thinking of these great purposes of God now and in the days ahead. You are needed. Whatever your own particular situation, your talents, your faith, your unselfishness, your discipleship are needed.

Uniting together from different backgrounds, countries, cultures, and life experiences, you help advance the stone cut without hands, as it rolls forth to fill the whole earth.³⁹

"Shall we not go on in so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, ... and on, on to the victory."

I look forward to the future. I hope you do as well. To your children and grandchildren, your friends and associates, you can speak about the future with optimism, joy, and anticipation. You are living your mortality in a glorious time of destiny.

Lest you think my positive feelings are misplaced, let me assure you that I share my optimism with the prophets of God. First, an experience with President Hinckley.

Just before the April General Conference of 2007, all the General Authorities of the Church, along with the eight Quorums of the Seventy from around the world, were gathered together. It would be the final talk of President Hinckley to the general priesthood leadership of the Church, from 50 nations speaking 31 different languages.

He delivered a powerfully positive message. Among other things, he said: "We have every reason to be encouraged, and I would like to say that this is only the beginning. Things will get better and better and better as we spread over the earth. I have a strong testimony of that.

"We are still persecuted a little. ... We don't need to worry about that. If the time ever comes that people don't speak critically about us, I will begin to worry. The Lord's work has always been opposed, and it always will be opposed. It has been opposed since the great war in heaven. That will go on and on and on. But in spite of that, the work will grow ever stronger, affecting for good the lives of people across the world."

He continued, "It is a miracle. ...The way this Church has expanded over the earth. ...I believe that all this growth is only the beginning. ...I am now an old man in my 97th year. I will not live to see it, but many of you men will." President Hinckley passed away 10 months later. He continued, "You will see the Church expand in a remarkable and miraculous way, both at home and abroad. What has happened before will be but prologue to what will happen hereafter. ... As...darkness increases the sunlight of the gospel will grow brighter and brighter."

President Hinckley concluded, "Be assured that this is the Lord's work. He will be our ever present friend. He will be our helper in time of need. He will magnify and bless us, comfort us and sustain us. He will not forsake us if we do not forsake Him."

The day following this moving address, I found myself sitting across from President Hinckley at lunch. As a member of the Presidency of the Seventy at the time, it was unusual for me to be so close to the Prophet. I searched for the right words to speak. Then I thought of his message from the day before. "President," I said, "that was quite a positive, optimistic talk you gave yesterday."

He put his soup spoon down, looked up at me with somewhat of an incredulous look, and raising the level of his voice just a little, said, "Well Brother Andersen, I believe it!"

"Me too!" I declared, "100%! I believe it too!"

President Thomas S. Monson speaks with great hope and optimism about the future. Were we not all lifted by these inspiring words? "I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us. ...Fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith. ...Heaven's blessings await us."

Kathy and I titled our message to you "Our Prayer for Our Granddaughters." Why such a title? First, I needed to find a way for you to see pictures of some of our grandchildren. Of our fifteen grandchildren, here are our four granddaughters: Caroline, Saylor, Courtney, and Claire. Aren't they beautiful? Kathy will share our prayers for them, and for our grandsons, in the context of these principles. Kathy, in my totally unbiased viewpoint, is the most wonderful, caring, and beloved grandmother in the world. For more than 37 years I have marveled at her goodness, faith, and spiritual depth. Her devotion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to me as her eternal companion are remarkable. With sensitivity and power she has taught our children and grandchildren the truths of eternity. Words cannot describe the measure of love I feel for her. Kathy, I love you very much.

Sister Kathy Andersen:

I love my husband. I am grateful for the privilege of accompanying him today. We are honored to be in your presence.

Last week our three-year-old grandson David expressed some concerns to his mother before going to bed. As he knelt to pray, he spent an unusual amount of time for a three year old praying to his Heavenly Father about his concern. When he finished his prayer David looked up at his mother and reverently said, "Mommy, He heared me."

Our prayer for our granddaughters is that they will be armed with the power of God in their lives knowing that our Heavenly Father loves us and that He will always hear our prayers.

Many years ago I read a story about a group of Latter-day Saints in a faraway land who had prepared for six months for a visit from the prophet of God. When he arrived in their country those humble, faithful saints had a remarkable experience that blessed their lives and future generations. Their faith, their love for the prophet and their effort to prepare themselves for his visit made a deep impression on me.

Just two weeks ago we were in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. I met a beautiful grandmother after the conference. She told me that when she learned that a member of the Quorum of the Twelve would speak in their stake, she wanted to do something special to prepare for that day. She decided to read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover. With a big smile she said, "I finished the Book of Mormon yesterday." For six weeks she had prepared. On that Sunday she had dressed in her very best clothes. With her little granddaughter by her side, she came to hear the word of the Lord through the voice of His servant.

Our prayer for our granddaughters is that they will be armed with righteousness as they believe and have faith in the words of those who are called and ordained to declare His holy word.

On Tuesday of this week, our granddaughter Saylor was baptized. On Wednesday our granddaughter Claire was baptized. They looked so beautiful. Their eyes were bright as they were confirmed by their fathers as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

The gift of the Holy Ghost is a holy gift, a sacred gift, a gift from God that becomes more precious with time and experience. Saylor and Claire are just beginning the experience of having the Comforter as a constant companion. What greater gift could we receive than the presence of a member of the Godhead in our lives to guide us, direct us, comfort us throughout our days of mortality—especially now in these days? This precious, priceless, sacred gift was received by our two eight-year-old granddaughters this week.

On the other end of life's spectrum, we recently visited my husband's mother, Kathryn Andersen. She is eighty-nine years old. As we visited with her she spoke of an impression she had about something she should do for her neighbors.

Whether eight or eighty-nine, our prayer for our granddaughters is that they will live each day of their lives mindful of this sacred gift and that they might "always have His spirit to be with them."

When I was the age of our granddaughters my mother, Martha Williams taught me "that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall "44"

I realize now, that my mother knew something of the mighty winds, the shafts in the whirlwind, the adversary's hail and mighty storm. She began preparing me when I was a child for whatever my future would hold by helping me to "build my foundation on Christ the Son of God."

Several years ago my husband told the story of Hadley Peay. She is a family friend. Hadley is now eleven years old. She "was born with a very serious hearing impairment requiring extensive surgery to bring even limited hearing. Her parents followed with tireless training to help her learn to speak.

"Once, when Hadley was four, she was standing in the checkout line at the grocery store with her mother. She looked behind her and saw a little boy sitting in a wheelchair. She noticed that the boy did not have legs.

"Although Hadley had learned to speak, she had difficulty controlling the volume of her voice. In her louder voice, she asked her mother why the little boy did not have legs.

"Her mother quietly and simply explained to Hadley that 'Heavenly Father makes all of His children different.'

'OK,' Hadley replied.

"Then, unexpectedly, Hadley turned to the little boy in the wheelchair and said, 'Did you know that when Heavenly Father made me, my ears did not work? That makes me special. He made you with no legs, and that makes you special. When Jesus comes, I will be able to hear and you will get your legs. Jesus will make everything all right."

We pray that our granddaughters will come to know for themselves with absolute certainty, the truthfulness of words spoken by an Apostle of the Lord this day that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God—that He is our Savior and Redeemer.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Elder Andersen:

In the same chapter where we find the theme for our conference, Nephi spoke of the writings that would come later from the Apostle John. Nephi testified of John's mission and of his words concerning the Second Coming of the Savior. Let me conclude with a few verses from the Book of Revelations.

- "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."
- "And he hath on his vesture...a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." 47
- "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away." 48
- "And he said...It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. ...
- "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God." 49
- "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." ⁵⁰
- "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.
- "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." ⁵¹
- "[And] blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."⁵²
- "And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads.

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." ⁵³

I testify with the certainty of my apostolic calling that that Jesus is the Christ, the light and life of the world. I leave with you a blessing, that as you devote yourself to Him, as you listen to Him, seek to be more like Him and follow Him, His reality will burn like nothing else inside of you. You will know as certain as you know you live that He lives, and that His promises of life eternal are true and certain. I bless you with your great gifts of teaching the gospel to others, that this testimony of Christ, this conversion to Christ, will sink deeply into the hearts of those you are close to. I pray that you may receive this personal approval, knowing that the Lord has blessed you to set someone else upon an eternal course.

He will come again. We shall see His face, and His name shall be upon us. May we look forward with faith. May we be worthy to bear His name, I pray in His holy name, the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas S. Monson, "If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear," Ensign, November 2004
<sup>2</sup> Boyd K. Packer, "Counsel to Young Men," Ensign, May 2009
<sup>3</sup> See Ezekiel 33:6-7
<sup>4</sup> See 1 Nephi 14:12
<sup>5</sup> See 1 Nephi 14:7
<sup>6</sup> Thomas S. Monson, "Stand in Holy Places," Ensign, November 2011, 82-86
<sup>7</sup> 1 Nephi 14:11
<sup>8</sup> 1 Nephi 14:7
<sup>9</sup> See 1 Nephi 14:1,7
<sup>10</sup> 1 Nephi 14:12
<sup>11</sup> 1 Nephi 14:12,14
<sup>12</sup> Journal of Discourses, 13:280
<sup>13</sup> 1 Nephi 11:34-35
<sup>14</sup> 1 Nephi 12:2
<sup>15</sup> See 1 Nephi 8:26-28
<sup>16</sup> Alma 30:48
<sup>17</sup> Alma 30:27
<sup>18</sup> 1 Nephi 12:18
<sup>19</sup> Alma 30:17
<sup>20</sup> 2 Nephi 9:28
<sup>21</sup> Ross Douthat, "Divided By God," New York Times, April 7, 2012
<sup>22</sup> See 1 Nephi 8:27
<sup>23</sup> 2 Nephi 9:30
<sup>24</sup> See Ephesians 6:12
<sup>25</sup> See 1 Nephi 8:27
<sup>26</sup> 2 Nephi 9:30
<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:19
<sup>28</sup> 1 Nephi 14:14
<sup>29</sup> Ephesians 6:13-17
<sup>30</sup> 1 Nephi 14:14
<sup>31</sup> Marion G. Romney, Conference Report, October 1963, 24
<sup>32</sup> Luke 22:32
<sup>33</sup> Alma 23:6
<sup>34</sup> Neal A. Maxwell, Moving in His Majesty and Power, p. 41
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³⁵ John 16:33

³⁶ "We Are All Enlisted," *Hymns*, 250

- ⁴⁰ Doctrine and Covenants 128:22 ⁴¹ Gordon B. Hinckley, Comments during General Authority and Area Seventy Training, March 29, 2007 ⁴² Thomas S. Monson, "Be of Good Cheer," *Ensign*, May 2009 ⁴³ Moroni 4:3; also Doctrine and Covenants 20:77

- ⁴⁴ Helaman 5:12
- ⁴⁵ Neil L. Andersen, "You Know Enough," *Ensign*, November 2008
- ⁴⁶ Revelation 19:6
- 47 Revelation 19:16
- ⁴⁸ Revelation 20:11
- ⁴⁹ Revelation 21:6-7
- ⁵⁰ Revelation 20:12
- 51 Revelation 21:3-4
- 52 Revelation 20:6
- 53 Revelation 22:4-5

³⁷ 1 Nephi 11:36

³⁸ Mosiah 3:17

³⁹ See Doctrine and Covenants 65:2