

31 March 2024

Finishers Wanted

Dear Sisters and Elders,

In the April 1991 General Conference, Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave a talk entitled, “Lest Ye Be Wearied and Faint in Your Minds”. This title comes from the scripture in Hebrews 12:3. *“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”* Albert Barnes, an American theologian (1798 – 1870) and Presbyterian Minister, wrote notes on the entire Bible. I find his work to be exceptional. Here is what he said about this verse. *“The meaning is, that there is great danger of being disheartened and wearied out by the opposition which you meet with. But with the bright example of one who was never disheartened, and who never became weary in doing the will of God, you may persevere. The best means of leading a faithful Christian life amidst the opposition which we may encounter, is to keep the eye steadily fixed on the Saviour.”* I love his counsel for those who may become weary in doing the will of God, *“keep the eye steadily fixed on the Savior”*. This is the very reason why “Facing the Savior” is at the very center of the Ghana Kumasi Mission Vision.

When Jesus Christ made his way into Jerusalem on what is now known as Palm Sunday, there were throngs of people around Him. Matthew 21:8 says *“a **very great multitude** spread their garments in the way...”*. When he came into Jerusalem, verses 10-11 say *“all the city was moved, saying, who is this? And the **multitude** said, this is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.”* Mark 11:8, uses the word *“**many**”* to describe the people. Luke 19:37, describes the scene as *“**the whole multitude of the disciples** began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty words that they had seen”*. John 12:12 uses the term *“**much people**”*. In every single description across the four Gospels in the Bible, it is clear there were a lot of people gathered to support and praise his triumphal entry into the Holy City.

And yet...

Where were all these people when Jesus was condemned by Caiaphas and then Pilate? Where were they when Jesus was being scourged? Where were they when he was being nailed to the cross? How tragic that less than a week earlier, multitudes were celebrating his triumphal entry, reminiscent of Solomon’s entry into Jerusalem as the heir of the throne on the back of his father David’s mule (see 1 Kings 39-40). And now, as Jesus approaches the last and great sacrifice, it is reminiscent of Isaiah’s prophecy recorded in Isaiah 63:3,5 *“I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me ... And I looked,*

and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold ...". What happened in Gethsemane and on Golgotha were done alone. Peter, James, and John fell asleep while Jesus suffered in the garden. Peter denied the Lord three times. Once flanked by hundreds upon hundreds, he was now all alone. When Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss and He was then arrested, Matthew 26:56 records, *"Then all the disciples forsook him and fled."*

In the April 1972 General Conference, then Elder Thomas S. Monson spoke on this very topic of "Finishers Wanted". He explained as he was walking in downtown Salt Lake City during the noon hour, he paused to look into the window of a furniture store. In the corner of the large display was a small sign with a brief message: "Finishers Wanted". Elder Monson explained, *"The store had need of those persons who had the talent and skill to make ready for sale the expensive furniture that the firm manufactured."* Elder Monson said the words stayed with him throughout the day and it became the foundation for his General Conference address. In his talk he said, *"In life, as in business, there has always been a need for those persons who could be called finishers. Their ranks are few, their opportunities many, their contributions great. From the very beginning to the present time, a fundamental question remains to be answered by each who runs the race of life. Shall I falter or shall I finish? On the answer await the blessings of joy and happiness here in mortality and eternal life in the world to come."*

Elder Monson continued by explaining that the scriptures are filled with stories of those who failed to finish. He mentioned David who gave way to the temptation of Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:3-4). He spoke of the rich young man who *"went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions"* (Matt 19:22). He spoke of Judas Iscariot who *"commenced his ministry as an apostle of the Lord. He ended it a traitor"*.

We also have plenty of examples of finishers in the scriptures. Elder Monson mentioned Job and Paul, the apostle. I would add Nephi the son of Lehi, Captain Moroni, Helaman, Mormon, Joseph Smith, and now President Russell M. Nelson. These men are all finishers. However, the greatest finisher of all was Jesus Christ. Tempted, torn, hated, betrayed, and ultimately crucified, Jesus did not shrink from doing His Father's will. And even when for a brief moment the Father's spirit was withdrawn while on the cross, He stayed the course, until he triumphantly proclaimed, *"It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."* (John 19:30). What was finished? The fulfillment of doing His Father's will!

In closing, I want to share two quotes from Elder Maxwell's talk mentioned earlier.

1. *"Therefore, how can you and I really expect to glide naively through life, as if to say, 'Lord, give me experience, but not grief, not sorrow, not pain, not opposition, not betrayal, and certainly not to be forsaken. Keep from me, Lord, all those experiences*

which made Thee what Thou art! Then let me come and dwell with Thee and fully share Thy joy!”

2. *“Faith likewise includes faith in God’s developmental purposes, for “the Lord seeth fit to chasten his people; yea, he trieth their patience and their faith.” ([Mosiah 23:21](#).) Still, some of us have trouble when God’s tutoring is applied to us! **We plead for exemption more than we do for sanctification**, don’t we, brothers and sisters?”*

I heard a quote recently that I think fits well here. I am unclear of its origin. *“Make my life comfortable rather than make my life holy.”* Which do we choose? Will we falter? Or will we be finishers?

As missionaries, we get to choose everyday whether we will be finishers. It starts with getting up daily at 6:30 am for we can never be great finishers until we become great starters. We become finishers when we start our powerful personal study by no later than 8:30 am fully clothed in our missionary attire, sitting at a clean desk, and prepared to be taught from on high (Ether 6:17). Finishers use the full hour to fill their lives with light and truth, which truly is the glory of God (D&C 93:36). We choose to be finishers when the quality of our planning and our companionship study leads us through a productive day. We are finishers when we go out with purpose after kneeling in prayer and bearing testimony to each other. We are finishers when we talk to everyone we see and seek to know people on a deeper level. We are finishers when our day is governed by the mission schedule. We are finishers when we come back in the evening with a smile on our face because we know that today we gave the Lord 100% of our effort.

Sisters and Elders, may we be finishers and not falter. May we worry more about becoming holy than becoming comfortable. May we stop pleading for exemption from hard things and begin to plead for sanctification. May we live our lives in such a way, that when our mortal life is over, we too can say, “It is Finished”.

All My Love,

President Kunz