

D&C#24 "Be Not Deceived, But Continue in Steadfastness"

Outline;

- I. Introduction
- II. It is Important We Are Able to Recognize the Deceptions of Satan that Can Lead Us into Apostasy
 - A. Not Recognizing the Prophet as the Source of Revelation for the Church
 - B. Pride
 - C. Being Critical of Leader's Imperfections
 - D. Being Offended
 - E. Rationalizing Disobedience
 - F. Accepting the False Teachings of the World
- III. We Can Remain Valiant in Our Testimonies and Avoid Deception
 - A. We Can Know Clearly Whom the Lord Has Called to Lead the Church
 - B. We Should Study the Scriptures and Doctrine of the Church
 - C. Recognize the Things of God Will Always Edify Us
 - D. We Should Apply the Lord's Pattern for Protecting Ourselves from Being Deceived
- IV. Conclusions

I. Introduction

In the Book of Mormon, Father Lehi had a vision of the tree of Life. He followed the path that led to "a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:10). He states, "I did go forth and partook of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:11). Lehi sought to have his family partake of the fruit. His wife and two children, Nephi and Sam, accept his invitation and partook of the fruit, while his two sons, Laman and Lemuel, refused. He then sees "numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:21). As the people were pressing forward to reach the tree, Lehi observed, "there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:23).

Another group were able to follow the path, clinging to the rod of iron, "even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree...and after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:24-25). The cause of their shame was as the result of those who were "on the other side of the river of water, [in] a great and spacious building...filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and [it was these people who] "were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers toward those who had come...and were partaking of the fruit. And after they had tasted of the fruit they [became] ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:26-28). The difference between those who fell away, being ashamed, and those who did not, was "we heeded them not" (B/M, 1 Nephi 8:33).

Let us reflect upon the simple message of Father Lehi's vision and its application to our lives. The tree of life is the pure love of Christ. The path is our journey to come to His Church. The rod of iron represents the scriptures or the word of God where we find the words of the prophets and apostles to guide and direct us. The fruit of the tree are the words of truth that we embrace as we become members of His Church. The spacious building is representative of Satan's multiple efforts to deceive us and to lead us away from the truths of the gospel we have embraced. One of the important truths of Lehi's vision, it not whether we will be tested, but how we individually respond when we are!

This lesson will focus, not only upon some of the ways Satan will seek to deceive us, but also steps we can take in order to remain steadfast in our commitment to the gospel and to the covenants we have made.

I. It is Important We Are Able to Recognize the Deceptions of Satan that Can Lead Us into Apostasy

Why is murmuring, criticizing, or any manner of evil speaking against the Lord's chosen servants met with such harsh and serious consequences? It is because, in truth, it is an insidious form of rebellion against God Himself. The Lord's commandment to not speak evil against His servants, is not to protect them from criticism, it is to protect us

from the deadly and spiritual death we will experience when we choose to separate ourselves from God.

In the early days of the Church, especially in Kirtland, Ohio, following the outpouring of the Spirit, there were many, including those in leadership positions, who turned against Joseph as their Prophet, and left the Church. Unfortunately, many who left the Church, were unable to leave the Church alone, but chose instead to become numbered among her enemies. As a result of their actions, these early apostates contributed to the persecution the members received in Ohio and Missouri.

Brent L. Top, Larry E. Dahl, and Walter D. Bowen state,

"It is unlikely that anyone would spontaneously and immediately apostatize and fight against Zion. That ultimate destination is reached step by step, starting with one small unchecked act or attitude that in time exponentially escalates to the point of open rebellion against the servants of the Lord. It might begin with a seemingly innocuous doubting or 'second guessing' of the prophets. These seeds of doubt may then sprout into tiny seedlings of murmuring and grumbling within one's own heart. If these weeds are not uprooted they can then rapidly grow and take firm root, blossoming into open criticism and mocking of the Lord's anointed. From criticism and faultfinding are eventually born the evil 'fruits' of rebellion, apostasy, and an ultimate spiritual death." (*Follow The Living Prophets: Timely Reasons for Obeying Prophetic Counsel in the Last Days*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1993, 164).

Spencer W. Kimball provides an example of this tragic cycle,

"There is the man who, to satisfy his own egotism, took a stand against the Authorities of the Church. He followed the usual pattern, not apostasy at first, only superiority of knowledge and mild criticism. He loved the Brethren, he said, but they failed to see and interpret as he would like. He would still love the Church, he maintained, but his criticism grew and developed into ever widening circles. He was right, he assured himself; he could not yield in good conscience; he had his pride. His children did not accept his philosophy wholly, but their confidence

was shaken. In their frustration, they married out of the Church, and he lost them. He later realized his folly and returned to humbleness, but so very late. He had lost his children. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:5)." ("To Kick Against the Pricks," in *Conference Report*, April 1955, 94-95).

Doctrine and Covenants 50:2-3

2 Behold, verily I say unto you, that there are many spirits which are false spirits, which have gone forth in the earth, deceiving the world.

3 And also Satan hath sought to deceive you, that he might overthrow you.

This revelation came at the request of Parley P. Pratt, John Murdock, and several other elders, based upon their observation of the manifestation of spirits among the saints.

Matthew McBride states,

"In this revelation [D&C 50], the Lord spoke as touching the Church and the spirits which have gone abroad on the Earth.' He indicated that many of these were 'false spirits' and that Satan hath sought to deceive you that he might overthrow you.' He cautioned that some of the practices exhibited by the enthusiasts were 'abominations' and that 'there are hypocrites among you & have deceived some which have given the adversary power.

"The revelation [D&C 50] proceeded to give instructions on how to detect manifestations inspired of God as opposed to those coming from other sources: 'If ye behold a spirit manifested that ye cannot understand & you receive not that spirit ye shall ask of the father in the name of Jesus & if he give not unto you that spirit then ye may know that it is not of God.' The elders were to rebuke false spirits with a loud voice, and the Lord promised they would be given power to resist evil influences so long as they remained humble." ("Religious Enthusiasm among Early Ohio Converts," in *Revelations in Context*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2016, 109-110).

B/M, 2 Nephi 2:18, 27

18 And because he had fallen from heaven, and had become miserable forever, he sought also the misery of all mankind. Wherefore, he said unto Eve, yea, even that old serpent, who is the devil, who is the father of all lies, wherefore he said: Partake of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall not die, but ye shall be as God, knowing the good and evil.

27 Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

*Why does Satan want to deceive us?

Satan rejected the Father's plan and was cast out of heaven for rebellion, with his followers. Here on earth, he and his servants seek to thwart the plan of the Father. They do so by destroying the Church of Jesus Christ, where the plan is being taught to God's children.

We will now address some of Satan's tools of deception:

A. Not Recognizing the Prophet as the Source of Revelation for the Church.

In the early months of the Church, the question arose as to the extent of Joseph being the sole authority of the Church. It began with Oliver Cowdery. He had been commissioned by the Lord to prepare a document for the Church outlining the articles of the Church. When he submitted it to Joseph, he proceeded to make significant changes. Oliver particularly objected to a phrase Joseph had used and demanded that he change it.

Joseph Smith states,

"I immediately wrote to him in reply, in which I asked him by what authority he took upon him to command me to alter or erase, to add to or diminish from, a revelation or commandment from Almighty God.

Joseph Smith states, after journeying from his home in Harmony, Pennsylvania, to see Oliver at the Whitmer home in Fayette, New York,

"I found the family in general of his opinion concerning the words above quoted, and it was not without both labor and perseverance that I could prevail with any of them to reason calmly on the subject. However, Christian Whitmer at length became convinced that the sentence was reasonable, and according to Scripture and finally, with his assistance, I succeeded in bringing not only the Whitmer family, but also Oliver Cowdery to acknowledge that they had been in error, and that the sentence in dispute was in accordance with the rest of the commandment." (History of the Church, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 105).

In August, 1830, Oliver, Joseph and Emma Smith moved from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to the Whitmer home, in Fayette, New York. Upon their arrival, Joseph learned that Hiram Page, the husband of one of the Whitmer daughters, was receiving revelation for the Church through the use of a "seer stone."

Joseph Smith states,

These "revelations [were] concerning the upbuilding of Zion, the order of the Church, etc., all of which were entirely at variance with the order of God's house, as laid down in the New Testament, as well as in our late revelations. I thought it wisdom not to do much more than to converse with the brethren on the subject, until the conference should meet [on the 26th day of September]. Finding, however, that many, especially the Whitmer family and Oliver Cowdery, were believing much in the things set forth by this stone, we thought best to inquire of the Lord concerning this important matter, and before conference convened, we received the following..." (History of the Church, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 109-110).

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"The Prophet prayed about the matter and received a revelation in which the Lord made clear that only the

President of the Church has the right to receive revelation for the Church (D&C 28:2-3,7). After hearing the Lord's instructions, "Brother Page, as well as the whole Church who were present, renounced the seer stone, and all things connected with it.' (*History of the Church*, 1:115)." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 135).

B. Pride

Ezra Taft Benson states,

"The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives (see B/M, Helaman 12:6). They put their perceptions of truth against God's great knowledge, their abilities versus God's priesthood power, their accomplishment against His mighty works...

"The prideful wish God would agree with them. They aren't interested in changing their opinions to agree with God's." ("Beware of Pride," in *Ensign*, May 1989, 4)

The experience of Thomas B. Marsh, as the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, is well known as an example of pride.

In brief, his wife and Sister Harris determined to share milk, including the strippings so that they might make a little larger cheese. Sister Harris was faithful to her agreement, however, Sister Marsh, it was determined, held back a pint of strippings for herself, and sent to Sister Harris, the milk. Finally the truth became known. The situation was referred first to the Teacher, then the Bishop, the High Council, and finally the First Presidency. Each, upon evaluating the information, they decided in favor of Sister Harris.

George A. Smith states,

"The [man who was] then President of the Twelve Apostles, the man who should have been the first to do justice and cause reparation to be made for wrong, committed by any member of his family, took the position [in favor of his wife], and what [happened] next? He went before a

magistrate and swore that the 'Mormons' were hostile towards the State of Missouri.

"That affidavit brought forth from the government of Missouri an exterminating order, which drove some 15,000 Saints from their homes and habitations." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 3. London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1856, [Eighth Reprint, 1974], 283-284).

After nineteen years of darkness and bitterness [and the death of his wife], Thomas A. Marsh painfully made his way to the Salt Lake Valley and asked Brigham Young to forgive him and permit him rebaptism into the Church. He was called to speak to the Saints at the Tabernacle.

Thomas B. Marsh states,

"Many have said to me, How is it that a man like you, who understood so much of the revelations of God as recorded in the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, should fall away?...

"I have sought diligently to know the Spirit of Christ since I turned my face Zionward, and I believe I have obtained it. I have frequently wanted to know how my apostasy began, and I have come to the conclusion that I must have lost the Spirit of the Lord out of my heart.

"The next question is, how and when did you lose the Spirit? I became jealous of the Prophet, and then I saw double, and overlooked everything that was right, and spent all my time in looking for the evil; and then, when the Devil began to lead me, it was easy for the carnal mind to rise up, which is anger, jealousy, and wrath. I could feel it within me; I felt angry and wrathful; and the Spirit of the Lord was gone, as the Scriptures say, I was blinded, and I thought I saw a beam in brother Joseph's eye, but it was nothing but a mote, and in my own eye was filled with the beam; but I thought I saw a beam in his, and I wanted to get it out; and, as much as brother Heber says, I got mad, and I wanted everybody else to be mad. I talked with Brother Brigham and Brother Heber, and I wanted them to be mad like myself; and [when] I saw they were not mad,...I got madder still because they were not. Brother Brigham, with a cautious look, said, 'Are you the leader of the Church, brother Thomas?' I answered, 'No.' Well then,' said he, 'Why do you not let that alone?'

"Well, this is about the amount of my hypocrisy--I meddled with that which was not my business." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 5. London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1858, [Eighth Reprint, 1974], 206-207).

Thomas B. Marsh was excommunicated at Quincy, Illinois, on March 17, 1839. He was rebaptized July, 1857, in Florence, Nebraska. He died in Utah a few years later, and was buried in the Ogden Utah Cemetery." (*LDS Biographical Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1. Compiled by Andrew Jenson. Salt Lake City: Andrew Jensen History Co., 1901, [Reprinted 1971], 76).

*What can we learn from this experience?

It does not matter your position or calling in the Church, each of us are susceptible to the temptations of Satan. It was Christ Himself, we reminded us regarding the beam and mote (Luke 6:41-42; B/M, 3 Nephi 14:3-5).

*How have you seen pride lead people into deception and apostasy?

I lived during the Watergate Trials when, because a President could not be honest, he was forced to resign in disgrace. To my knowledge, he never confessed his wrongdoing. It was tragic event for the nation to have to experience.

*What does the Lord promise those who humble themselves before Him?

Doctrine and Covenants 112:2-3, 10 [Revelation Thomas B. Marsh]

2 Verily I say unto you, there have been some few things in thine heart and with thee with which I, the Lord, was not well pleased.

3 Nevertheless, inasmuch as thou hast abased [humbled] thyself thou shalt be exalted; therefore, all thy sins are forgiven thee.

10 Be thou humble; and the Lord thy God shall lead thee by the hand, and give thee answer to thy prayers.

B/M, Ether 12:27

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.

C. Being Critical of Leader's Imperfections

We sometimes expect our leaders to be without fault, not realizing that they are human just like each of us. Rather than our criticism, they need our prayers and understanding.

As recorded in the History of the Church, Simonds Ryder stands as a example of one who took exception to a small error, that would grow until it led him to apostatize from the Church.

The History of the Church states,

"It appears that some time after his baptism he [Simonds Ryder] was ordained an Elder of the Church; and somewhat later informed by a communication signed by the Prophet Joseph and Sidney Rigdon, that it was the will of the Lord made known by the Spirit, that he should preach the Gospel. Both in the letter he received and in the official communication to preach, however, his name was spelled R-i-d-e-r, instead of Ryder, and is soberly stated in the *History of Disciples of the Western Reserve* (Hayden), that he thought if the "Spirit" through which he had been called to preach could err in the matter of spelling his name, it might have erred in calling him to the ministry as well; or, in other words, he was led to doubt if he were called at all by the Spirit of God, however, because of the error in spelling his name! The same circumstance is referred to in *Kennedy's Early Days of Mormonism* (pg. 104). Kennedy also remarks that while in the uncertain mood excited by this incident Ezra Booth returned from Missouri, and a comparison of experiences led to a complete overthrow of all belief in the new creed in the minds of both. (*History of the Church, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], Footnote: 260-261*).

*What can we learn from this event?

A special stone, strippings of milk, the misspelling of your name, the exchange of a birthright for a mess of pottage (Genesis 25:30-34), the means are insignificant to Satan, as long as they are successful in bringing about his evil ends.

*How does being critical of our Church leaders make us more susceptible to deception?

When we are critical of the Lord's servants, we are also being critical of the Lord Himself. We then place ourselves in opposition to His will. Unless we repent, we will find ourselves apostatizing from the Church, and joining Satan in his rebellion.

D. Being Offended

It has been observed, that some Church members have allowed themselves to be offended by the actions of other members. They then allowed these feelings to fester until they have led some into apostasy as the following incident illustrates.

George A. Smith states,

"When the temple was completed there was a great manifestation of power. The brethren gathered together to its dedication. We considered it a very large building. Some nine hundred and sixty could be seated, and there would be room for a few to stand, the congregation was swelled to a little over a thousand persons at the time of the dedication...The congregation was so large that we could not all get in; and when the house was full, then, of course, the doors were closed, and no more were admitted. This caused Elder Frazier Eaton, who had paid seven hundred dollars towards building the house to apostatize, because he did not get there early enough to the meeting.

"[In addition,] when the dedication prayer was read by Joseph, it was read from a printed copy. This was a great trial of faith to many. "How can it be that the prophet should read a prayer?" What an awful trial it was, for the Prophet to read a prayer!

"The service of the dedication being over, it was [then] repeated again on the next day, to accommodate those who had not been able to get in on the first day..." (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 11. London: Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1867, [Eighth Reprint, 1974], 9).

*What do we learn from this event?

A door locked to the late comer, or a dedication prayer read by the Prophet, become yet further means Satan uses to plant the seed of discontent. If we, in turn, allow it to grow, the result will be a loss of the Spirit with us.

*How do we allow ourselves to be offended by others today?

When we allow an inadvertent slight by an individual, or pause to criticize our leaders, as in the past, it can lead us to become disaffected with the Church. If we do not repent of our error, it will lead to the loss of our Church membership.

*How can being offended lead to apostasy?

We take a big step when we allow little things to become big things. We take another step when we do not quickly forgive our neighbor their shortcomings. We take another step when we harbor feelings of offense.

*How can we overcome feelings of being offended?

One way is to humble ourselves, go to the Lord, and ask His forgiveness for our continuing to hold feelings of animosity towards another person. We can also seek His strength in helping us to be able to forgive them. Only when our repentance is complete, can the Spirit be fully restored.

Doctrine and Covenants 64:8-11

8 My disciples, in days of old, sought occasion against one another and forgave not one another in their hearts; and for this evil they were afflicted and sorely chastened.

9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his

trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

10 I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men.

11 And ye ought to say in your hearts--let God judge between me and thee, and reward thee according to thy deeds.

Doctrine and Covenants 82:1

1 Verily, verily, I say unto you, my servants, that inasmuch as you have forgiven one another your trespasses, even so I, the Lord, forgive you.

*Whom does the Lord require us to forgive?

Everyone whom we feel have offended us.

*Why is it sometimes difficult to be forgiving?

We seem to want some consequences to come to the individual for any action, perceived or real, to us. Like the Law of Moses, we want an eye for an eye.

*What are some of the consequences in not forgiving someone?

Generally the first step is to avoid any contact with the individual. Some have even moved from the area in order to distance themselves from their offender. Friendships are lost. And, in extreme, partnerships in business or marriage are severed, and damages are sought through the legal system.

E. Rationalizing Disobedience

Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual states,

"Rationalizing is [defined as our] excusing or defending unacceptable behavior. It involves [our] looking for a way to ease our conscience for doing something we know is wrong." (*Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1999, 137).

Martin Harris's loss of the 116 pages of the Book of Mormon borders on rationalizing disobedience. By his actions, he demonstrated his great reluctance to take responsibility for his actions, until the truth could no longer be withheld.

The Church History in the Fulness of Times states,

"...the Lord granted a conditional permission [to Martin regarding his taking the 116 pages]. Martin agreed in writing to show the manuscript to only four or five people, including his wife, his brother, Preserved Harris; his father; his mother; and Lucy's sister, Mrs. Polly Cobb.

[When three weeks passed, and Martin had not returned, Joseph Smith left his wife, Emma, and made the trip from Harmony, Pennsylvania to his parent's home in Manchester, New York].

"Joseph finally arrived at his parents home in Manchester. He immediately sent for Martin. Martin usually came quickly, so breakfast was prepared for him and the Smiths. Several hours passed before Martin finally plodded up the walk with head hung down." (*Church History In The Fulness of Times*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989, 47-48).

Lucy Mack Smith, the Prophet's mother states,

"On coming to the gate, he stopped, instead of passing through, and got upon the fence, and sat there for some time with his hat drawn over his eyes. At length he entered the house. Soon after which we sat down to the table, Mr. Harris with the rest. He took up his knife and fork as if he was going to use them, but immediately dropped them. Hyrum, observing this, said 'Martin, why do you not eat; are you sick?' Upon which Mr. Harris pressed his hands upon his temples, and cried out in a tone of deep anguish, 'Oh, I have lost my soul! I have lost my soul!'

Joseph who had not expressed his fears till now, sprang from the table, exclaiming, 'Martin, have you lost that manuscript? Have you broken your oath, and brought down condemnation upon my head as well as your own?'

"Yes; it is gone," replied Martin, "and I know not where."
(*History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith*.
Edited by Preston Nibley. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958,
128).

*How is rationalizing a form of deception?

When we rationalize our behavior, we delay the confession of our disobedience and extend the period of avoidance for taking responsibility for our actions.

*How do we sometimes try to rationalize our behavior?

It is manifest by young children when they fail to confess their misbehavior, and instead blame others for their actions.

It also occurs with adults when confronted by a police officer when operating their car. Rather than admitting our guilt, we seek for some reason to justify our breaking the law in an often futile effort to avoid receiving a ticket.

*Why is this dangerous?

We may even convince ourselves that we are not responsible for our actions. As a result, we delay our repentance.

*How can we recognize and overcome rationalization?

Honesty is the best policy. When we take responsibility for our actions, we take the first step toward repentance. Once our repentance is complete, we are then blessed with a return of the Spirit in our lives.

F. Accepting the False Teachings of the World

B/M, 2 Nephi 28:8, 16

8 And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God--he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few

stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God.

16 Wo unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught and revile against that which is good, and say that is of no worth!...

*What are some of the false teachings of the world that deceive members and lead them into apostasy?

Satan teaches that the Church is too restrictive, and limits our freedom. This is especially true on Sunday where we are required to attend three hours of Church instead of being able to relax after a busy work week.

The world teaches that it is permissible to have sexual relations outside of marriage, and there is no sin. It also teaches that material possessions are far more important than individual spirituality.

H. David Burton states,

"One of [Satan's] insidious strategies is to progressively soften our senses regarding what is right and wrong. Satan would have us convinced that is fashionable to lie and cheat. He encourages us to view pornography by suggesting that it prepares us for the real world. He would have us believe that immorality is an attractive way of life and that obedience to the commandments of our Father in Heaven is old-fashioned. Satan constantly bombards us with deceptive propaganda desirably packaged and carefully disguised. Satan creates false heroes which, if emulated, will lead us to the depths of sin." ("Heroes," in *Ensign*, May 1993, 46).

Boyd K. Packer states,

"Latter-day Saints are not obedient because they are compelled to be obedient. They are obedient because they know certain spiritual truths and have decided, as an expression of their own individual agency, to obey the commandments of God. ...We are not obedient because we are blind, we are obedient because we can see" ("Agency and Control," in *Ensign*, May 1983, 66).

II. We Can Remain Valiant in Our Testamonies and Avoid Avoid Deception

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"*Valient* means fearless, valorous, brave, courageous." (*Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition, 1966], 820).

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

"The great cornerstone of valience in the cause of righteousness is obedience to the whole law of the whole gospel.

"The day is coming, [and] more than ever has been the case in the past, when we will be under the obligation of making a choice, of standing up for the Church, of adhering to its precepts and teachings and principles, of taking the counsel that comes from the apostles and prophets whom God has placed to teach the doctrine and bear witness to the world. The day is coming when this will be more necessary than has ever been the case in our day or at any time in our dispensation." ("Be Valiant in the Fight of Faith," in *Ensign*, November, 1974, 35-36).

*What can we do to keep ourselves from being deceived and led into apostasy.

The four following characteristics will assist us in this effort:

A. We Can Know Clearly Whom the Lord Has Called to Lead the Church

As we have noted, during the early years of the Church, there were individuals who sought to correct Joseph Smith (Oliver Cowdery) or to receive revelations on behalf of the Church (Hiram Page's seer stone).

Doctrine and Covenants 28:2, 6-7

2 But, behold, verily, verily, I say unto thee, no one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church excepting my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., for he receiveth them even as Moses.

6 And thou shalt not command him who is at thy head,
and at the head of the church;
7 For I have given him the keys of the mysteries, and
the revelations which are sealed, until I shall
appoint unto them another in his stead.

These words, while initially given for the benefit of Oliver Cowdery, are equally applicable for us, that we may know that the Prophet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is the Lord's appointed mouthpiece to speak for the Church.

Doctrine and Covenants 43:1-3

1 O Hearken, ye elders of my church, and give ear to
the words which I shall speak unto you.
2 For behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye
have received a commandment for a law unto my church,
through him whom I have appointed unto you to receive
commandments and revelations from my hand.
3 And this ye shall know assuredly--that there is none
other appointed unto you to receive commandments and
revelations until he be taken, if he abide in me.

*Who receives revelations and commandments for the entire Church today?

Joseph F. Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency taught,

"The Lord has...appointed one man at a time on the earth to hold the keys of revelation to the entire body of the Church in all its organizations, authorities, ordinances and doctrines. The spirit of revelation is bestowed upon all its members for the benefit and enlightenment of each individual receiving its inspiration, and according to the sphere in which he or she is called to labor. But for the entire Church, he who stands at the head is alone appointed to receive revelations by the way of commandment and as the end of controversy." (*Messages of the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Vol. 4. Compiled by James R. Clark. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1970, 270).

Harold B. Lee states,

"We have some tight places to go before the Lord is through with this church and the world in this dispensation, which is the last dispensation, which shall usher in the coming of the Lord...

"Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet, 'as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;...as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith' (D&C 21:4-5)...You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict your political views. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But, if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory' (D&C 21:6)...

"Your safety and ours depends upon whether or not we follow the ones whom the Lord has placed to preside over his church. He know whom he wants to preside over this church, and he will make no mistake...

"Let's keep our eye on the President of the Church."
(*Conference Report*, October 1970, 152-153).

*How can we avoid being deceived by those who claim falsely to have received revelation for the Church?

Doctrine and Covenants 43:4-7

4 But verily, verily, I say unto you, that none else shall be appointed unto this gift except it be through him; for if it be taken from him he shall not have power except to appoint another in his stead.

5 And this shall be a law unto you, that ye receive not the teachings of any that shall come before you as revelations or commandments;

6 And this I give unto you that you may not be deceived, that you may know they are not of me.

7 For verily I say unto you, that he that is ordained of me shall come in at the gate and be ordained as I have told you before, to teach those revelations which you have received and shall receive through him whom I have appointed.

Those that have been called, ordained, and sustained to represent the Church will have their photo published in the Church Ensign magazine in a chart of current General Authorities in the May and November issues.

The following two scriptures confirm an important doctrine in the Church:

Doctrine and Covenants 26:2

2 And all things shall be done by common consent in the church, by much prayer and faith, for all things you shall receive by faith. Amen.

In the 2013 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the heading for Section 26 states, "Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet to Oliver Cowdery, and John Whitmer, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, July 1830 (see the heading for section 24)." (Heading: Section 26. *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, [2013], 45). *Heading: Section 24 is found in D&C#05.

Doctrine and Covenants 28:13

13 For all things must be done in order, and by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith.

*What is the principle of common consent?

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"In the Church of Christ where the government is that of the Kingdom of Heaven, neither autocracy nor democracy obtains, but government by *Common Consent*. That is to say, the initiative of all that pertains to the government of the Church rests with the Head of the Church, even our Lord Jesus Christ, and He exercises this sovereign function through his authorized servants, upon whom He has bestowed the Holy Priesthood: but it is the privilege of the people

to accept, or reject, His law and ordinances, for God has given every individual free agency. Obedience must be voluntary." (*The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951m [Revised Edition, 1962], 131).

Common consent is manifest by the members showing their willingness to sustain those who are called to serve in the Church, usually by raising their right hand.

*How can the principle of common consent protect us from being deceived?

It allows us to know who had been called to preside and administer in the Church, thus keeping us from being deceived by the claims of those who have not been properly called.

B. We Should Study the Scriptures and Doctrine of the Church

The following two scriptures remind us of the importance of our reading and studying the word of the Lord as it is contained in the scriptures:

Doctrine and Covenants 1:38

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

Doctrine and Covenants 33:16

16 And the Book of Mormon and the holy scriptures are given of me for your instruction; and the power of my Spirit quickeneth all things.

Remember that only the Book of Mormon had been published at the time of this revelation. Neither the Doctrine and Covenants or the Pearl of Great Price were in published form nor had they been sustained by the membership of the Church at the time this revelation was given. Had this occurred, these additional scriptures would have been included.

*How can studying the scriptures and the words of latter-day prophets help us avoid being deceived?

We can better discern the truthfulness of ideas by comparing them with the truths we learn from the scriptures and our current leaders.

If we are familiar with the scriptures, we may receive further enlightenment by the Spirit when our latter-day prophets and apostles reference them in their instructions.

We will also be knowledgeable when we are confronted by those who seek to mislead us.

Harold B. Lee states,

"If [someone] writes something or speaks something that goes beyond anything that you can find in the standard Church works, unless that [someone] be the prophet, seer, and revelator--please note that one exception--you may immediately say, 'Well, that is his own idea.' And if he says something that contradicts what is found in the standard Church works, you may know by that same token that it is false. We can know or have the assurance that they are speaking under inspiration if we are so living that we can have a witness that what they are speaking is the word of the Lord." (*Teachings of Harold B. Lee*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996, 540-541).

Scripture study strengthens our testimonies so we are less likely to become complacent in righteousness or to be influenced by false doctrine.

Harold B. Lee continues,

"If we are not reading the scriptures daily, our testimonies are growing thinner, our spirituality isn't increasing in depth." (*Teachings of Harold B. Lee*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996, 152).

C. We Should Recognize that the Things of God Will Always Edify Us

B/M, Moroni 7:16-17

16 For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

17 But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil;..

Joseph Smith states,

"[Soon after the Saints settled in Kirtland], many false spirits were introduced, many strange visions were seen, and wild, enthusiastic notions were entertained; men ran out of doors under the influence of this spirit, and some of them got upon the stumps of trees and shouted, and all kinds of extravagances were entered into by them;...many ridiculous things were entered into, calculated to bring disgrace upon the Church of God, to cause the Spirit of God to be withdrawn." (History of the Church, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Second Edition Revised, 1969], 580).

Doctrine and Covenants 50:17-24

17 Verily I say unto you, he that is ordained of me and sent forth to preach the word of truth by the Comforter, in the Spirit of truth, doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

18 And if it be by some other way it is not of God.

19 And again, he that receiveth the word of truth, doth he receive it by the Spirit of truth or some other way?

20 If it be some other way it is not of God.

21 Therefore, why is it that ye cannot understand and know, that he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth?

22 Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.

23 And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.

24 That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

*What do these verses teach about how we can discern the things of God from the things of Satan?

The things of God will edify us by enlightening our minds and helping us grow spiritually. The things of God make us want to follow the Savior and improve our lives. They speak peace to us. The things of Satan do the opposite.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"There is no saying of greater truth than 'that which doeth not edify is not of God. And that which is not of God is darkness, it matters not whether it comes in the guise of religion, ethics, philosophy or revelations. No revelation from God will fail to edify.'" (*Church History and Modern Revelation. Manual for Course of Study for the Melchizedek Priesthood Quorums for the year 1947. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1946, 184*).

D. We Should Apply the Lord's Pattern for Protecting Ourselves from Being Deceived

A revelation from the Lord to help us from being deceived:

Doctrine and Covenants 52:14-19

14 And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations--

15 Wherefore he that prayeth, whose spirit is contrite, the same is accepted of me if he obey mine ordinances.

16 He that speaketh, whose spirit is contrite, whose language is meek and edifieth, the same is of God if he obey mine ordinances.

17 And again, he that trembleth under my power shall be made strong, and shall bring forth fruits of praise

and wisdom, according to the revelations and truths which I have given you.

18 And again, he that is overcome and bringeth not forth fruits, even according to this pattern, is not of me.

19 Wherefore, by this pattern ye shall know the spirits in all cases under the whole heavens.

*According to these verses, what are the characteristics of teachers who are "of God?"

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"15. *He that prayeth.* Prayer offered by one whose spirit is contrite; one who is humble enough to obey God's ordinances, is accepted of God. 'Contrite' means 'humble.' 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart. O God, thou wilt not despise' (Psalm 51:17); a broken spirit and a contrite heart are those which the obstinacy of pride has been replaced by the humility of repentance, frequently brought about by sorrow and affliction.

"16. *He that speaketh.* The hearers may know whether a speaker is from God by the humility of spirit and the effect of the words. Are they edifying? If not, they are not from God. Does the speaker obey God's ordinances? If not, he is not of God.

"17. *He that trembleth.* This is another indication of the presence of the Lord, with which the Elders of Israel are familiar; for they almost invariably have that experience when they stand before a congregation to address it. The promise is that he who feels his weakness under the power of God shall be made strong and be able to feed those who hear him, with 'fruits of praise and wisdom.'

"18. *He that is overcome...is not of me.* There were some in those early days who were not fully converted, and their spirits not be contrite they failed in their ministry, and did not follow the pattern of prayer, humility and faith." (*The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Revised Edition, 1962], 305-306).

Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett remind us,

"It is not enough that one pray or even that one pray with a contrite spirit; neither is it enough merely to preach the true gospel to be counted the Lord's representative. Since deceivers, hypocrites, imposters, and the influence of Satan are part of this world even in the Church (see D&C 50:7-8), alongside genuinely godly individuals and influences,...

"To be 'of God,' one must obey his ordinances and bear the fruits of that obedience...Influences or spirits genuinely of God motivate humans to obey him. This is the pattern by which the godly or satanic character of all people and of all influences may be surely discerned." (*A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, Vol. 2. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2001, 120).

*How can the pattern that is given in this passage help us avoid being deceived?

As we carefully note the qualities in this revelation as they are exemplified in the teacher, we will be, through the Spirit, able to identify one who is 'of God,' in contrast to one who is not. The counsel, referenced in B/M, Moroni 7:16-17, provides additional clarity to the principles found in this revelation.

B/M, Moroni 7:16-17

16 For behold, the Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

17 But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know which a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doeth the devil work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

Carlos E. Asay offered the following nine suggestions as a course of action as we are confronted by those who question our faith:

- "1. Avoid those who would tear down your faith. Faith-killers are to be shunned.
- "2. Keep the commandments [yourself].
- "3. Follow the living prophets. Always keep your eye on the President of the Church.
- "4. Do not contend or debate over points of doctrine. [Remember B/M, 3 Nephi 11:29]. We are inconsistent if we resort to Satantic tactics in attempting to achieve righteous ends.
- "5. Search the scriptures. [They are] our personal guide or compass. [Be familiar with our beliefs].
- "6. Do not be swayed or diverted from the mission of the Church. [Share our beliefs and ask them to pray regarding their truth].
- "7. Pray for your enemies. There are many who are kept from the truth--not because they don't want it, but because they know now where to find it. (see D&C 112:12).
- "8. Practice 'pure religion.' Involve yourself in Christian service...whether in the Church or out.
- "9. Remember that there may be many questions for which we have no answers and that some things have to be accepted simply on faith." ("Opposition to the Work of God," in *Ensign*, November 1981, 67-68).

IV. Conclusions

We live in an era when the forces of evil are rampant. They appear only to be held in check by those who worship God and strive to keep His commandments. We may only expect that the wickedness, supported by Satan and his servants, will only continue to increase.

As wickedness increases, those who are righteous will be under greater pressure to initially relax and then abandon their beliefs. In order to continue to stand with the faithful, even if they may be few in number, will require steadfastness and the ability to recognize deception in

whatever form it may take. It will mean standing firm and to heed it not.

It is important We are Able to Recognize the Deceptions of Satan that Can Lead Us into Apostasy: It is essential to our salvation that we understand that when we murmur, criticize, or speak evil against the Lord' anointed servants, we are only speaking against our God! If we do not stop, we will find ourselves joining forces with Satan and suffering spiritual death.

The areas we must avoid include: (A) Not Recognizing the Prophet as the Source of Revelation for the Church, as manifest by Oliver Cowdery and the "seer stone" of Hiram Page; (B) Pride as exemplified by Thomas B. Marsh; (C) Being Critical of Leader's Imperfections as noted by the actions of Simonds Ryder; (D) Being Offended as seen by the actions of Frazier Eaton; (E) Rationalizing Disobedience as seen in the actions of Martin Harris; and, (F) Accepting the False Teachings of the World as manifest by our softening our senses regarding right and wrong. Examples may include viewing R-rated movies, or shopping on Sunday.

We Can Remain Valiant in Our Testimonies and Avoid Deception: In order to be numbered among the Lord's faithful, we should: (A) Know Clearly Whom the Lord Has Called to Lead the Church. Now is the time to strengthen our testimonies and become converted. (B) Study the Scriptures and Doctrines of the Church. Be familiar with the teachings of the Prophets and Apostles. (C) Recognizing that the Things of God Will Always Edify Us; and, (D) Apply the Lord's Pattern for Protecting Ourselves from Being Deceived. As we are familiar with its individual components and then apply them in our lives, it will protect us from being deceived.

As we follow, with exactness, the counsel we receive from our leaders, we will be able to stand, and not be deceived.

Our next lesson [D&C#25], addresses the Priesthood and the way it blesses our lives.