

## In the Path of Their Duty

Elder David A. Bednar—Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—October 2023

**1** You who today are pressing forward in the path of your duty are the strength of the Savior's restored Church.

**2** President Clark (J. Reuben Clark, "They of the Last Wagon," *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1947, 704–5, 747–48) described in great detail the characteristics of and the challenges faced by the migrants who traveled in the last covered wagon in each of the long wagon trains that crossed the plains. He praised these anonymous and uncelebrated heroes who, day after day, week after week, and month after month, choked on the dust stirred up by all of the wagons rolling in front of them—and who overcame the relentless obstacles they encountered along the way.

President Clark declared, "They of the last wagon pressed forward, worn and tired, footsore, sometimes almost disheartened, borne up by their faith that God loved them, that the restored gospel was true, and that the Lord led and directed the Brethren out in front."

He concluded his message with this stirring commendation: "To these humble souls, great in faith, great in work, great in righteous living, great in fashioning our priceless heritage, I humbly render my love, my respect, my reverent homage."

**3** President Hunter explained: (Howard W. Hunter, "No Less Serviceable" (Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 2, 1990), 1–2, [speeches.byu.edu](https://speeches.byu.edu).)

"It was said [about the young and valiant Captain Moroni]:

"If all men had been, and were, and ever would be, like unto Moroni, behold, the very powers of hell would have been shaken forever; yea, the devil would never have power over the hearts of the children of men' ([Alma 48:17](#)).

"What a compliment to a famous and powerful man. ... Two verses later is a statement about Helaman and his brethren, who played a less conspicuous role than Moroni, that reads:

"Now behold, Helaman and his brethren were no less serviceable unto the people than was Moroni' ([Alma 48:19](#))."

President Hunter continued, "In other words, even though Helaman was not as noticeable or conspicuous as Moroni, he was as serviceable; that is, he was as helpful or useful as Moroni."

President Hunter then counseled all of us to be no less serviceable. He said: "If you feel that much of what you do this year or in the years to come does not make you very famous, take heart. Most of the best people who ever lived weren't very famous either. Serve and grow, faithfully and quietly."

I am grateful for millions of Church members who today are coming unto the Savior<sup>6</sup> and pressing forward on the covenant path in the last wagons of our contemporary wagon trains—and who truly are no less serviceable. Your strong faith in Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and your unpretentious, consecrated lives inspire me to be a better man and disciple.

I love you. I admire you. I thank you. And I commend you.

A statement in the Book of Mormon by Samuel the Lamanite best summarizes my feelings for you.

"Behold that the more part of them are *in the path of their duty*, and they do walk circumspectly before God, and they do observe to keep his commandments and his statutes. ...

"Yea, I say unto you, that the more part of them are doing this, and they are striving with unwearied diligence that they may bring the remainder of their brethren to the knowledge of the truth."

## A The Essence of Your Duty

Duties and rights are assigned in order to regulate the relation of one individual towards another aiming at a certain balance between individuals so that too much power is not concentrated in the hands of an individual which he can misuse to suppress or exploit another.

**A1** Duty is felt as a moral obligation; what we owe to another. But regulation of conduct dependent on determining what one's duty is implies an action is seen as worthy or unworthy depending on what an individual feels obligatory or depending on what rules and regulations he has internalized. There is a higher source of activity that does not depend on our knowledge of rules for conduct. We act on the basis of duty when we feel we have to do it. But there is an action based on the feeling I want to do it. Such activity comes not from desire to abide by rules or obligations but the directive comes from the heart or from one's own nature. When we feel we need to act on the basis of duty our thinking is to conform to certain rules and regulations of the society and on what is normally considered moral. Hence philosophers like Jiddu Krishnamurti termed social morality to be immorality for it is barter system.

**A2** We do something to gain something and by abiding by our duties we conform to the society and earn social respectability. Hence it is not free action for there is no freedom of choice. But freedom of action does not imply unbridled activity for the desire to act in an opposite way does not free us but binds us for it is an imitation. Free action is not unregulated but regulated by our understanding of moral values and an inherent need to abide by them. It is acting on the basis of an immediate recognition of what is good and acting on its basis for its own sake not for a desire of reward or fear of punishment.

**A3** Duties are a way society makes individuals abide by moral values but they wouldn't be required if an individual is himself predisposed to act on the basis of those moral values. No cajoling would be required if we can do something for its own sake. Such an action would be free in the true sense of the term.

Vaibhav Narula 'What is the essence of your duty?'

[<https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-essence-of-your-duty>]

**4** I believe the phrase “in the path of their duty” describes discerning brothers and sisters who look for and sit next to people who are alone in Church meetings and in a variety of other settings. They consistently strive to “comfort those that stand in need of comfort,”<sup>4a</sup> without expectations of acknowledgment or praise.

**5** The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes spouses and children who support a companion, parent, or child who serves in a leadership position in the Lord’s restored Church. Their steady, quiet, and typically unrecognized sustaining influence makes possible the blessing of many individuals and families in ways that will be fully known only in eternity.

**6** The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes individuals who, having turned away from God, humbly are *re*-turning to Him once again,<sup>6a</sup> repenting of their sins, and seeking the cleansing and healing power of the Savior’s Atonement. Coming unto Christ<sup>6b</sup> by returning to the covenant path from sinful detours into “forbidden paths”<sup>6c</sup> is spiritually essential and righteously rigorous. As they press forward with faith and weary not in well-doing, they are laying the foundation of a great work in their individual lives,<sup>6d</sup> “to all generations and for eternity.”<sup>6e</sup>

**7** The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes righteous individuals who yearn to become yoked to the Savior through the authorized covenants and ordinances of His gospel—but may be prohibited from doing so by factors beyond their control. I promise your personal anguish will be relieved and your obedience and faithfulness to patiently submit your will to God will be rewarded in “the own due time of the Lord.”<sup>7a</sup> “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”<sup>7b</sup>

**8** The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes the inspired translators and interpreters around the world who serve the Lord by helping friends and members to “hear the fulness of the gospel in [their] own tongue, and in [their] own language.”<sup>8a</sup> Their voices, signed language, and translated documents convey eternal truths, yet few of us know their names or ever express appreciation. Through the gift of tongues with which they have been blessed, translators and interpreters serve diligently, selflessly, and, most often, anonymously to help people receive the spiritual gift of faith through reading and hearing the word of God.<sup>8b</sup>

**9** The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes faithful married men and women who honor their covenant responsibility to multiply and replenish the earth and who are blessed with the strength and stamina to wrestle with their children in sacrament meetings. In an increasingly confused world beset with calamities and misplaced priorities, these courageous souls heed not the secular voices extolling self-centeredness; they reverence the sanctity and importance of life in Heavenly Father’s plan of happiness for His children.

Many married couples also trust in God when the righteous desires of their hearts are not realized how or when they had hoped and dreamed. They “wait upon the Lord” and do not demand that He meet their mortal deadlines. “For since the beginning of the world have not men heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath any eye seen, O God, besides thee, how great things thou hast prepared for [them] that waiteth for thee.”

**10** The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes the thousands and thousands of nursery leaders and Primary teachers who love and instruct the children of the Church each Sabbath day.

**11** The phrase “in the path of their duty” describes dedicated children tenderly caring for aged parents, a sleep-deprived mother comforting a frightened child while standing guard as a “lioness at the gate” of her home, Church members who arrive early and stay late to set up and take down chairs, and inspired individuals who invite family, friends, and associates to come and see, come and help, and come and stay.

**4a Mosiah 18:9** Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life—

**6a Helaman 7:17** O repent ye, repent ye! Why will ye die? Turn ye, turn ye unto the Lord your God. Why has he forsaken you?

**6b Moroni 10:30, 32**

**30** And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

**32** Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in nowise deny the power of God.

**6c 1 Nephi 8:28** And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.

**6d Doctrine and Covenants 64:33** Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceedeth that which is great.

**6e Doctrine and Covenants 109:24** We ask thee, Holy Father, to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity;

**7a 1 Nephi 10:3** That after they should be destroyed, even that great city Jerusalem, and many be carried away captive into Babylon, according to the own due time of the Lord, they should return again, yea, even be brought back out of captivity; and after they should be brought back out of captivity they should possess again the land of their inheritance.

**7b Psalm 30:5** For his anger *endureth but* a moment; in his favour *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning.



**8a Doctrine and Covenants 90:11** For it shall come to pass in that day, that every man shall hear the fulness of the gospel in his own tongue, and in his own language, through those who are ordained unto this power, by the administration of the Comforter, shed forth upon them for the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**8b Romans 10:17** So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.