

Stand Up Inside and Be All In

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Of the Seventy

May we recalculate our route if need be and look forward with great hope and faith. May we “stand up inside” by being valiant and “all in.”

Several years ago our young granddaughter ran up to me and excitedly announced, “Grandpa, Grandpa, I scored all three goals at my soccer game today!”

I enthusiastically replied, “That’s great, Sarah!”

Her mother then looked at me with a twinkle in her eye and said, “The score was two to one.”

I didn’t dare ask who’d won!

Conference is a time of reflection, revelation, and sometimes *redirection*.

There is a car rental company with a GPS system called NeverLost. If you make a wrong turn once you put in your desired destination, the guiding voice does not say, “You fool!” Rather, in a very pleasant voice, it says, “Recalculating route—when possible, make a legal U-turn.”

In Ezekiel we read this wonderful promise:

“If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

“All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.”¹

What a fabulous promise, but it requires two *alls* to receive the promise of the third. Turn from all; keep all; then all is forgiven. This requires being “all in”!

We should not be like the man who, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported, sent an envelope filled with cash along with an anonymous letter to the Internal Revenue Service which said, “Dear IRS: Enclosed please find money I owe for past taxes. P.S. If after this my conscience still bothers me, I’ll send you the rest.”²

That's not how we do it! We don't hold back to see what the minimum is we can get by with. The Lord requires the heart and a willing mind.³ Our whole heart! When we are baptized, we are fully immersed as a symbol of our promise to fully follow the Savior, not half-heartedly. When we are fully committed and "all in," heaven shakes for our good.⁴ When we are lukewarm or only partially committed, we lose out on some of heaven's choicest blessings.⁵

Many years ago, I took the Scouts on a campout in the desert. The boys slept by a large fire they had made, and like every good Scout leader, I slept in the back of my truck. In the morning when I sat up and looked at the campsite, I saw one Scout, whom I will call Paul, who looked particularly rough around the edges. I asked how he had slept, and he replied, "Not very well."

When I asked why, he said, "I was cold; the fire went out."

I answered, "Well, fires do that. Wasn't your sleeping bag warm enough?"

No answer.

Then one of the other Scouts loudly volunteered, "He didn't use his sleeping bag."

I asked in disbelief, "Why not, Paul?"

Silence—then finally the sheepish reply: "Well, I thought if I didn't unroll my sleeping bag, I wouldn't have to roll it up again."

True story: he froze for hours because he was trying to save five minutes of work. We may think, "How foolish! Who would ever do that?" Well, we do it all the time in much more dangerous ways. We are, in effect, refusing to unroll our spiritual sleeping bags when we don't take the time to sincerely pray, study, and earnestly live the gospel each day; not only will the fire go out, but we will be unprotected and grow spiritually cold.

When we are complacent with our covenants, we are complicit with the consequences. The Lord has counseled us "to beware concerning yourselves, to give diligent heed to the words of eternal life."⁶ And He further declared, "My blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not."⁷

In reality, it is much easier to be "all in" than partially in. When we are partially in or not in at all, there is, in the *Star Wars* vernacular, "a disturbance in the force." We are out of sync with God's will and therefore out of sync with the nature of happiness.⁸ Isaiah said:

“The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”⁹

Fortunately, no matter where we are or where we have been, we are not beyond the reach of the Savior, who said: “Therefore, whoso repenteth and cometh unto me as a little child, him will I receive, for of such is the kingdom of God. Behold, for such I have laid down my life, and have taken it up again.”¹⁰

As we continually repent and rely upon the Lord, we gain strength as we come full circle in possessing the humility and faith of a little child,¹¹ enriched with the wisdom borne from a life of experience. Job proclaimed, “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.”¹² It was Tennyson who wrote, “My strength is as the strength of ten, because my heart is pure.”¹³ The Lord has counseled, “Stand ye in holy places, and be not moved.”¹⁴

Our son Justin passed away at age 19 after fighting a lifelong disease. In a sacrament meeting talk he gave not long before he left us, he shared a story that must have resonated with him about a father and his young son who went into a toy store where there was an inflatable punching bag in the shape of a man. The boy punched the inflatable man, who tipped over and immediately bounced back after every punch. The father asked his young son why the man kept bouncing back up. The boy thought for a minute and then said, “I don’t know. I guess it’s because he’s standing up on the inside.” In order to be “all in,” we need to “stand up inside,” “come what may.”¹⁵

We stand up inside when we wait patiently upon the Lord to remove or give us strength to endure our thorns in the flesh.¹⁶ Such thorns may be disease, disability, mental illness, death of a loved one, and so many other issues.

We stand up inside when we lift up the hands that hang down. We stand up inside when we defend the truth against a wicked and secular world that is becoming increasingly more uncomfortable with light, calling evil good and good evil¹⁷ and “condemning the righteous because of their righteousness.”¹⁸

Standing up inside in spite of difficulties is possible because of a clear conscience, the strengthening and comforting assurance from the Holy Ghost, and an eternal perspective which surpasses mortal understanding.¹⁹ In our premortal life we shouted for joy at the opportunity to experience mortality.²⁰ We were “all in” as we excitedly made the decision to be valiant defenders of our Heavenly Father’s plan. It is time to stand up and defend His plan again!

My 97-year-old father recently passed away. Whenever someone asked him how he was doing, his consistent reply was “On a scale of 1–10, I’m about a 25!” Even when this dear man could no longer stand or even sit and had great difficulty speaking, his answer was still the same. He was always standing up inside.

When my dad was 90, we were in an airport and I asked him if I could get him a wheelchair. He said, “No, Gary—maybe when I get old.” And then he added, “Besides, if I get tired of walking, I can always run.” If we are not able to be “all in” the way we are presently walking, then maybe we need to run; maybe we need to recalculate our route. We might even need to make a U-turn. We might need to study more intently, pray more earnestly, or just let some things go so we can hang on to those things that really matter. We may need to let go of the world so we can hang on to eternity. My father understood this.

When he was in the navy during World War II, there were those in the great and spacious building²¹ who made fun of his principles, but two of his shipmates, Dale Maddox and Don Davidson, took note and did not. They asked, “Sabin, why are you so different from everyone else? You have high morals and don’t drink, smoke, or swear, but you seem calm and happy.”

Their positive impression of my father did not match what they had been taught about the Mormons, and my father was able to teach and baptize both shipmates. Dale’s parents were very upset and warned him that if he joined the Church he would lose his sweetheart, Mary Olive, but she met with the missionaries at his request and was also baptized.

Near the end of the war, President Heber J. Grant called for missionaries, including some married men. In 1946, Dale and his wife, Mary Olive, decided Dale should serve even though they were expecting their first child. They eventually had nine children—three boys and six girls. All nine served missions, followed by Dale and Mary Olive, who served three missions of their own. Dozens of grandchildren have also served. Two of their sons, John and Matthew Maddox, are currently members of the Tabernacle Choir, as is Matthew’s son-in-law Ryan. The Maddox family now numbers 144 and are wonderful examples of being “all in.”

In going through my dad’s papers, we came across a letter from Jennifer Richards, one of the five daughters of the other shipmate, Don Davidson. She wrote: “Your righteousness changed our lives. It is hard to comprehend what our lives would be like without the Church. My dad died loving the gospel and trying to live it to the end.”²²

It is hard to measure the impact for good each individual can have by standing up inside. My father and his two shipmates refused to listen to

those in the great and spacious building who were pointing the finger of scorn.²³ They knew that it is far better to follow the Creator than the crowd.

The Apostle Paul could have been describing our day when he told Timothy that “some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling.”²⁴ There is a lot of “vain jangling” going on in the world today. It is the conversation of those in the great and spacious building.²⁵ Often it appears as a form of rationalization to justify wickedness or manifests itself when people lose their way and accelerate. It sometimes comes from those who have not paid the price to be “all in” and prefer to follow the natural man as opposed to the prophet.

Gratefully, we know how it ends for the faithful. When we are “all in,” we have the all-encompassing assurance that “all things work together for good to them that love God.”²⁶ As Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, “Don’t fear, just live right.”²⁷

My father-in-law taught at BYU and loved BYU football but could not bring himself to watch their games because he was so nervous about the outcome. Then a wonderful thing happened—the VCR was invented, which made it possible for him to record the games. If BYU won, he would watch the recording with perfect confidence, absolutely certain of the ending! If they were penalized unfairly, injured, or behind late in the fourth quarter, he wasn’t stressed because he knew they would pull it out! You might say he had “a perfect brightness of hope”!²⁸

So it is with us. As we are faithful, we can have equal certainty that things will work out well for us in the end. The Lord’s promises are sure. This does not mean this mortal university will be easy or without many tears, but as Paul wrote, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”²⁹

Brothers and sisters, no one has sinned tomorrow. May we recalculate our route if need be and look forward with great hope and faith. May we “stand up inside” by being valiant and “all in.” May we be pure and courageous in defending our Heavenly Father’s plan and the mission of His Son, our Savior. I bear you my witness that our Father lives, that Jesus is the Christ, and of the reality of the great plan of happiness. I pray the Lord’s choicest blessings to be with you, and I do so in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. Ezekiel 18:21–22.

2. See, for example, Roy B. Zuck, comp., *The Speaker's Quote Book: Over 5,000 Illustrations and Quotations for All Occasions* (2009), 107–8.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 64:34.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 21:6.
5. See Revelation 3:15–16.
6. Doctrine and Covenants 84:43.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 29:17.
8. See Alma 41:11.
9. Isaiah 57:20–21.
10. 3 Nephi 9:22.
11. See 3 Nephi 11:37–38.
12. Job 17:9.
13. Alfred Tennyson, “Sir Galahad,” in *Poems of the English Race*, sel. Raymond MacDonald Alden (1921), 296.
14. Doctrine and Covenants 87:8.
15. See Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Come What May, and Love It,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 26–28.
16. See 2 Corinthians 12:7.
17. See Isaiah 5:20.
18. Helaman 7:5.
19. See Philippians 4:7.
20. See Job 38:7.
21. See 1 Nephi 8:26.
22. Jennifer Richards, letter to Marvin Sabin, July 5, 2009.
23. See 1 Nephi 8:27, 33.
24. 1 Timothy 1:6.
25. See 1 Nephi 8:26–28.
26. Romans 8:28.
27. See Bangambiki Habyarinmana, *Inspirational Quotes for All Occasions* (2013).

28. 2 Nephi 31:20.
29. 1 Corinthians 2:9.