

At War with Satan



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Devotional

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Brothers and Sisters, Aloha!

It's so good to be here with you, I never imagined that we would have this invitation to be here and to share our testimonies with you. It is a great honor to be here, and a great honor to serve a mission in Hawaii. People at the Visitors' Center will ask us often, "How did you get called to Hawaii, you must've known someone!" I explain to them that i was the managing director for the missionary department for many years, and they say, "Ah, that's the connection." And i say "Yes, no." When i retired, Elder Dallin H. Oaks said to me, "What're your plans?" And i said, "Our plan is to serve a mission." He said, "Where do you want to serve and what do you want to do?" And I said, "Elder Oaks, we offer no thoughts on where or what. We leave that in the Lord's hands, and trust that you'll know where the Lord would have us serve." So, we were surprised as anyone else when our call letter came and we were invited to come to Hawaii.

I am Stephen Brown Allen. I was born of goodly parents !!!! I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. My intent today is to speak by the Spirit, and remind us all who we are, why we are here, and how to endure the trials and temptations of this life.

The title of this talk is “At War With Satan.” May I suggest to you that if you have the opportunity to speak and you put a title like this out in advance, you invite the adversary to ramp up against you. See, and someone just fell over too. It is not my intent, brothers and sisters, to dwell on him, the adversary, but to remind us of who he is and what his purpose is. Mormon doctrine says, Satan is the formal Hebrew name for the devil. It means the adversary, signifying that he wages open war with the truth and all who obey its principles. In the Bible Dictionary we read, “The devil is the enemy of righteousness, and of those who seek to do the Will of God.” Latter-day revelation confirms the biblical teaching that the devil is a reality and that he does strive to leave men and women from the work of God. One of the major techniques of the devil is that he uses to cause human beings to think they are following in God’s way, when in reality they are deceived by the devil to follow other paths. He is miserable in his situation and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works. Indeed brothers and sisters, we are at war with Satan, and incidentally we know who wins the war. Before we came to this earth, we had the opportunity of choosing to have agency or not have agency. In 2 Nephi it says, “Wherefore the Lord gained a man that he should act for himself. Wherefore man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by one or the other. 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.” So here we are, on planet earth. We have the opportunity to choose every single day. every hour of every day. We make critically important choices, deciding which side we’re going to be on. Like the opening hymn, Who’s on the Lord’s Side, Who? We get to decide that in every decision we make in our lives.

Recently, as a mission we read the Book of Mormon in 100 days, and in that reading of the Book of Mormon, I had the impression that I should look for and underline and learn the tactics of the adversary, which are so clearly enumerated there. And frankly, I was very, very surprised at how much the strategy and tactics of the adversary are identified in the Book of Mormon. If you’ve never had that experience, I would invite you to do that. It is very enlightening. Consider, for example, just the book of 1 Nephi. We learn about Satan’s tactics, such as helping people mock the prophets, kill the prophets, disputations over the words of the prophet, murmuring, complaining. The great and spacious building, wandering in strange wards... wandering in strange roads, not strange wards. Although there may be some of those, too. Mists of darkness, it’s just amazing, even just in 1 Nephi, how many of the adversary’s tactics are revealed if you’re looking for them. It became clear to me that Lehi, father Lehi, clearly understood this war, and he wrote abundantly about it, especially in the blessings and the counsel that he gave his sons at the beginning of 2 Nephi. And I encourage you to read the Book of Mormon and find those tactics and strategies, knowing his tactics and strategies helps me to protect myself from his influence. I have wondered, for example, why so many chapters in the Book of Mormon talk about war. You know, if you’re making a movie of the Book of Mormon, the way it’s written, it wouldn’t get a PG rating. Especially the war chapters would move straight into an R rating. And I’ve wondered why? Why so much about that? Lately, as we move into these last days, as we see the adversary fighting against everything that is good as we see him helping people be deceived on all levels, and thinking about the concept that we’re at war with him, it all of a sudden helps me understand the application of the war chapters in my life. When I think about the fortifications and the forts and the efforts that those people went through to defend themselves, over and over and over again, many many different battles and wars are fought and we learn about different tactics for each one, it helps me think about the war that I’m fighting, and what I need to do as a husband, as an individual, as a father, as a grandfather, to help protect myself and my family from the adversary. Our challenges come in many different shapes and sizes. May I suggest to you that you will find solutions to most of those challenges as you turn to the scriptures in humble prayer.

Some years ago I was serving as a counselor in a stake presidency. As you know, counselors, stake presidency travel around to the different wards during Sunday meetings. This particular Sunday, I had come back to our ward building and everybody was in class. There was no one in the hallways, and I stopped at the water fountain. This water fountain was a two level water fountain. There was the tall one for adults, and the little one for short people, meaning children, and so as I was having a drink of water, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that this little boy appeared from nowhere and he got up on the little stool next to me and he pushed the button down to drink water. Now the water pressure in this water fountain was really very sensitive. And so as I watched him out of the corner of my eye, push his button down, and I watched my water pressure drop in half, I kept my eye closely on him until he was ready to drink. And as he leaned forward to get his drink of water, I let go of my button and I'd have to tell you, it was a great shot. It hit him right in the face and he stood back and let go, wiped his face off, and I didn't know him, I had no idea who he was, but when he pushed his button down again, this big stream of water came up, and he leaned in for it and I pushed my button down. His water pressure dropped in half, he went down for it, I let go, it was another great shot. At this point, I looked down the hallway both directions, because counselors in stake presidencies aren't supposed to act this way. But seeing nobody around, we continued our little game. I don't know how many times I splashed him, but the interesting thing to me was that he never figured out who was causing him his grief. Even though I was right next to him, I could've put my hand on his head, he never ever figured out that it was me. And maybe, I don't know, seven times later, he left for class.

Now you might say, What does that have to do with being at war with Satan? May I suggest to you that in each of our lives, we have buttons that people push to get us to react. Perhaps you've had a younger brother or a younger sister, or an older sister, who used to push your buttons, raise your hand if you know what I'm talking about. See, all the button pushers' hands went up.

The adversary is a button pusher. He and his angels know a great deal about us. They know our strengths and our weaknesses. They know where the chinks are in our armor, and they know how to get us. And so they push buttons, and frequently, we don't even recognize that our buttons are being pushed, but we react frequently our reaction is not in a very Christlike manner. I have a younger brother who used to push my buttons with regularity, and he has a few scars on his body as a result of that, and he's always blamed me for that. And he's probably right, that would be the first time in my life I've acknowledged that. But my point was that he's a button pusher, or at least he used to be a button pusher. Do you push people's buttons? Do you ever take part in helping people do evil? Do you ever have your buttons pushed? Let me give you a couple of examples about pushing buttons. Remember, some buttons are tiny while others look small but are huge. Here's a button into your mind pops the thought, "I don't have time to pray today." Where did that come from? Who's the source of "I don't have time to pray?" A lack of prayer will disengage you for membership in the Celestial Kingdom if you don't overcome that weakness. Here's another one. "I don't have time to study the Book of Mormon today." Another one: "I don't have time to attend the temple, I have too many things going on." "I don't have time to date." That's for you who aren't missionaries in the audience. Especially pointed young men in the audience, who think they don't have time to date. There may be some who would say, "I don't have time to serve a mission, I'm on an academic path, it's going to take me right to where I want to go, and it can't possibly be interrupted. I don't have time for that." Someone else might have the button push that says, "My goodness, all my roommates are going on missions. I guess I'd better do that also." That might be a young woman. I remember specifically when President Monson announced the lowering of the age of missionaries, and we went from 59500 in the field to 89500 in the space of very few months, and many of those who went out in the first batches were people who got caught up in the wave. They'd never anticipated serving a mission, they'd never considered that they'd in fact seldom had an idea of what it was even going to be like, but they chose to go. And their lack of preparation showed itself in the field. But again, that button that, "Well, everyone else is doing that, maybe I better go along." It doesn't just apply to missionary work, it applies toward wisdom issues and a thousand other things. Here's another button: "Don't study, grades aren't important. Don't date, just hang out. Don't get married, you're too young. He or she made me so angry. He made me angry, it's not that I chose to be angry, another person's responsible for that." Deceptions, allurements, seductions, becoming devices of evil and of evil spirits and doctrines of devils are right at the root of many of these challenges. So how do we protect ourselves? How do we recognize that we're at war with the adversary and do our best to avoid it? May I suggest several things. Number one is pray. Pray with all your heart might mind and strength, all the time for God's help and prayer will a great protector if you're praying sincerely and regularly. Number two: Listen to and follow the spirit. remember the Holy Ghost is a great gift that you received when you were confirmed a member of the church. It's the third member of the Godhead. You have the right to have his constant companionship. If you have done something that offends the Holy Ghost, that causes him to have withdrawn from you, you can repent of that. Repentance requires humility, but you can repent and change if you choose to. Third protection is to read the Book of Mormon. Study the Book of Mormon daily. Fourth, follow the prophet. It's a rollercoaster ride right now to follow President Nelson. You think of how exciting all these changes are and all the new developments that are going in place. There are some in the Church who think it's too much, too fast, too something else. The adversary's pushing those buttons on them because he knows of their lack of faith. Attend church every Sunday. Come follow me, follow that program, understand it, learn it, and be a part of it. Minister, serve other people, and attend the temple regularly.

Isaiah saw our day, I've become kind of a fan of Isaiah in my older age, and I found this chapter and there are these verses in 2 Nephi chapter 12. Imagine Isaiah, all those hundreds of years ago, seeing our time. Here's what it says: 12:7, "Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures." Does that describe 2019? "Their land is also full of horses neither is there any end of their chariots." How would you describe an automobile or a truck? I think he described them there as chariots and horses. Next verse, "Their land is also full of idols, they worship the work of their own hands." In your pocket, you have a device. Raise your hand if you have a device. Almost everybody has a device. Let me read that again: Their land is also full of idols, they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made." What a great description of a digital device. How much time do we spend worshipping that idol? An idol could be defined as something that we spend a significant amount of time or energy on. It doesn't have to be a golden calf to be an idol. An iPhone can certainly be an idol depending on what we do with it. And in the case of digital phones and devices, they open up a world of glorious possibilities for us. Or a world of the very worst type of sin available. And so I suggest brothers and sisters that as we recognize that we're at war with Satan, as we recognize that he is our enemy, if we take a look at our own lives and figure out what it is that's causing us our grief, where our weaknesses are, and build defenses around those weaknesses to protect us, we'll put ourselves in a better position to follow the Savior and be his disciples. Think about the people of Ammon. They knew that their greatest temptation was to use weapons of war to murder people. They had done it for a long time and yet, they chose to bury their weapons of war. Not only does the scripture say they buried their weapons of war, it says they buried their weapons of rebellion. So let me ask you and I ask myself, what are your weapons of rebellion? I would define weapons of rebellion as the little kind of secret things that nobody knows about. It's your own private little stash of Oreo cookies. Or something you don't think anyone else sees or knows about. And sometimes those things— I'm not suggesting that Oreo cookies are bad— but sometimes our weapons of rebellion lead us to rebellion and they strengthen the adversary and weaken our relationships.

In closing, I share the scripture from 2 Nephi chapter 31. This is one of the rare scriptures where our Heavenly Father speaks. It says, "Wherefore ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope and love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ— feasting upon the word of Christ, not the diet plan, not the Weight Watchers plan for study, but the feasting plan on the word of Christ— and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father, ye shall have eternal life ." Which is eternal life with our Heavenly Father. President Nelson said we choose every day where we want to live eternally. By how we think, feel, speak, and act. I invite us to reconsider our actions and our thoughts and see whether or not we can strengthen our fortifications that may be breaking down from time to time as we fight this war with Satan. We will win because our Heavenly Father loves us and he wants us to return home and His Son Jesus Christ has paved the way for us if we choose to follow Him and obey His commandments. We can once again return and live with them and have no more influence ever from the adversary in our lives. That would be my desire and I'm sure yours. I testify that Jesus Christ lives and He is the head of this Church and that our Heavenly Father knows us and loves us and cares about us and accepts our repentance when it is sincere in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.