

along that path "growing brighter and brighter unto the perfect day."

Lilly Shipp sang a soprano solo, "O My Father."

### ELDER DAVID O. McKAY.

Grandeur of the Church organization—Great responsibility of teachers therein—Every man should first take heed unto himself—Illustration of proper preparation for the work—No man can teach what he does not feel and know—What to teach, and how to prepare—Teaching should suit conditions and the needs of those who are taught—A word to bishops.

At this moment there is just one supreme wish in my heart, and it is this: That the divine feeling experienced by all present this afternoon intensified just now as we sat in profound silence, listening to those inspired words so beautifully and impressively sung by Sister Shipp, might be felt in every home and in every heart throughout the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I rejoice that the Lord, in his wisdom, has so organized his Church that this wish might, at least in a measure, be fulfilled. As that thought came to me, just a moment ago, I saw in my mind's eye an army of approximately twenty thousand men on whom rests the great responsibility of carrying the gospel message of peace to every fireside throughout Zion. Those who comprise this army are the ward teachers.

I never contemplate the organization of this Church in any least degree whatsoever, but I am impressed with the divinity of the work. I can not see, for my life, why every honest man in the world,

who gives even but little thought to this great organization and the opportunities it offers for producing men and women of character, can not get a testimony, even by reason and observation, of the divinity of the Church of Christ as established in this latter day. Why, the stamp of divinity is upon every feature of the work! All who labor sincerely in it can truthfully say that if any man will do the will of God he shall know for himself whether the doctrine is of God or whether it is of man.

These twenty thousand men mentioned comprise only a very small portion—an important portion, however,—of the work of the ministry.

It is said in Ephesians, fourth chapter, that Christ gave some apostles and some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers: "for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The teachers, in the Church, holding the holy priesthood, have devolving upon them the great responsibility of *perfecting the Saints*, and of *edifying the body of Christ*; therefore, I think it is not too much to say that it is their duty, their *duty*, to carry into every home just such a divine spirit as we have experienced here in these sessions of conference. No greater responsibility can rest upon any man, than to be a teacher of God's children.

When Paul said good-bye to the churches in Asia, knowing that he would never again come back to those branches among which he had labored so incessantly and diligently for several years, he called the elders of Ephesus to him one day, over to Miletus. He did not go over to the Church where he had

recently spent nearly three years, because he wanted to hasten to Jerusalem; but he could not pass them without saying good-bye to them. He sent word to them to meet him over at the town of Miletus, where he gave them instructions. You remember that among other things he said: "Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood; for I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." The admonition to these men—and among them were bishops, for the word that is interpreted there "overseers" is used in another place as bishops—was to take heed unto *themselves* first and then to the people over whom they presided. Associated with those bishops were elders, just as we have them in the Church. That same admonition is applicable to the elders today, who are presiding over the Church as ward teachers. Some of them feel that their calling is of little importance, that there is not much dignity attached to it, when the fact is, that there is no more important work in the Church. We can not say of any one calling in the Church, that it is of more importance than another, because all are devoted to the development, to the instruction, to the salvation of God's children. So it is with the calling of teacher; but if there be any preference given, because of superior advantages in winning these people to salvation, it will go to those men holding the priesthood of God, who come in direct contact with the individual members of the Church. The duty, however, of each

man who has accepted this calling is to first take *heed unto himself*.

The other day it was my privilege to drive through the fields in my old home town. I passed through two farms up near the mountain canal. I saw one that had yielded an exceptionally good crop of oats. Notwithstanding the drought, the cold in the spring, and other disadvantages, the farmer had thrashed an excellent yield. Just over the fence was another oat field, but a failure, comparatively speaking. I said to the man: "Why, what is the matter? You must have planted poor seed." "No, it is the same seed that my neighbor has." "Well, then it was planted too late, and you did not have enough moisture in the ground to bring it up." "It was sown the same afternoon that he sowed his." Upon further inquiry, I learned that the first man had plowed his in the fall; then he had disked it carefully in the spring, making a mulch on the surface, and by such tilling had conserved the moisture of the winter. His neighbor, on the other hand, had plowed his late in the spring, had left the furrows unharrowed; the moisture had evaporated. Following the sowing of the seed came four weeks or six weeks of drouth, and there was not sufficient moisture to germinate the seed. The first man had made preparation, the proper kind of preparation, and nature yielded the increase. The second man labored hard, but his preparation was poor; indeed, he had made inadequate preparation.

I now can picture in my mind twelve thousand divisions that may be compared in a way to these two fields. In each one are found—not oats, not wheat, not grasses, not things that perish,—but living be-

ings as eternal as the Father himself. Over each of these divisions in God's great garden have been placed overseers called teachers, and they are asked to nourish and to inspire God's children. I venture the thought that the Great Gardener in looking over his fields can see some that are thriving in righteous activity and others are starving because of the drought of neglected duty, of the chilling atmosphere of vanity, or the blight of intemperance. Why? Perhaps because the gardeners, the overseers, had not made necessary preparations, or performed their duty well.

The first thing to do, my brethren, is to look to yourselves, to see whether or not you are prepared to teach. No man can teach that which he himself does not know. It is your duty to teach that Jesus Christ is the redeemer of the world, that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God, and that to him in this last dispensation there appeared God the Father and his Son in person. Do you believe it? Do you feel it? Does that testimony radiate from your being when you enter into the home? If so, that radiation will give life to the people whom you go to teach. If not, there will be a dearth, a drouth, a lack of that spiritual environment in which the Saints grow.

Second, Is your heart free from backbiting, from fault-finding, from hard feelings one to another? It is your duty, to see that there is no backbiting, that there is no iniquity existing in the Church. You can teach effectively only that which you yourselves feel. Part of the preparation of a teacher consists in freeing his own heart from those things. In doing so follow the advice of one good writer who says:

"In the very depths of your soul dig a grave; let it be as some forgotten spot to which no path leads; and there, in the eternal silence bury the wrongs which you have suffered. Your heart will feel as if a load had fallen from it and a divine peace come to abide with you." With that divine peace in your soul go into the homes and teach the people.

But that condition is but the beginning. Three other things should be kept in mind for thorough preparation. The first is a *knowledge of those whom you are to teach*; the second, a *knowledge of what you are to teach*; and third, a *knowledge as much as may be obtained at least by thoughtful consideration and prayer, of how you are going to teach*.

I have never understood just why we have limited our duties of teacher to a visit once a month. A visit is not teaching. Reading the outline as prepared by the bishop or the high council is not teaching. Just repeating some passages of scripture, or merely the telling of something to the members of the family in a home is not teaching. Teaching is the awakening of thought in the minds of those whom we visit, and the convincing of their souls of the truth of the message that we bring to them. There must be giving and receiving, a reciprocal condition. How necessary it is, then, to know those whom we teach! No two families in any district are alike. I call to mind now one group of six families, one member of which is a patriarch in the Church, living in the sunset of a faithful life with his daughter, a teacher in the public schools, and a grand-daughter, a student in the high school. On the same block

next to him, reside a young couple, who have but recently joined the Church. The girl had grown up in our communities, but she had not joined the Church until recently. Two of their little children are also baptized. Across the street reside a widow and her daughter, the daughter a typist in one of the business offices of the city, and the other three families present conditions just as varying. Brethren, the message, and particularly the manner of presenting that message might not be the same when given to one who had spent his life in faithful labor in the Church, as when given to those who are newly converted. As each family is different from another so each individual in the family differs from others, so our messages and our methods, particularly our methods of presentation, might vary. I cite this just to impress us with this thought, that it is our duty to know those whom we are going to teach. That is one reason, I think, why the Lord says: "It is the duty of the teacher to watch over the Church always." Not just once a month but always a teacher; no hour in the day when you are free from that responsibility. There is no day in the week when you are free, and when you should not feel it your duty to do something, if possible, to make that group of members in the Church better and happier.

What you are to teach is the gospel of Jesus Christ. When the bishop gives you any special message—tithing, for example, study that principle, first by "taking heed unto yourself" to see if you can teach it consistently. If it be prayer, "take heed unto yourself" in regard to prayer. Do you get down on

your knees before you go out to teach that message? Do you study some boy who is a little questionable in his life to know just what attitude he will take towards prayer? Do you pray for God to inspire you to say something to lead such a one to see the necessity of prayer?

O teachers, yours is an important calling! God help you to be true to it, to feel that part of the responsibility of carrying on God's work, in this the last dispensation, rests upon you.

Even after you have studied your groups as indicated or just hinted at here, and presented your message in the most effective manner you are capable of, your duty is not ended. President Lund, I think, referred to the light attendance at some of our sacrament meetings. You carry the responsibility, teachers, of seeing to it that members of the Church attend to sacrament meeting. How can you teach that duty effectively unless you yourself be present, that you may be able intelligently to commend those in your district who are in attendance, and to teach those who are absent?

Just a word to the bishops. I believe that teaching will be more effective in the Church if you will call your priesthood to you, and point out to them in meeting, after prayer, in humility, what it means for them to go out from house to house as your representatives. Don't just call them somewhat indifferently from the pulpit, and make an assignment in an indefinite way; but rather there in your bishop's meeting tell them individually what it means to be a teacher, ask them if they will stand by you in your efforts to uphold the standard of

the Church. When you have occasion to release them, do it in a dignified and honorable manner, by telling them how you appreciate what they have done, and why they are at present released.

I bear you my testimony that this is the work of God. I know it, I know it. I know that God will help us in this work. I know that he is by us, if we will but call upon him and ask him to direct us, if we will live so that he can. He sometimes prompts us, and we go on headlong without heeding the prompting; but he is near to help us. I know that the happiest time of our lives is when we are devoted to his work. God help us to be true to it while we are in this life. There is only one life, and we shall pass through this probationary state but once:

"Not many lives, but only one have we!

One—only one.  
How precious should that one life ever be!  
Day after day filled up with precious toil,  
Hour after hour bringing in new spoil."

May God guide us day after day and hour after hour in the great work of teaching, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Notices of overflow meetings on Sunday to be held in the Assembly Hall and under a tent near the Bureau of Information, were read by President Smith.

The choir and congregation sang: "My country, 'tis of thee."

Prayer was pronounced by Elder J. S. Page, Jr., president of the Nebo stake of Zion.