

ELDER CHARLES H. HART*(Of the First Council of Seventy)*

No doubt all of us who have had the privilege of attending these conference meetings have felt that it was good for us to be here. I think that upon each occasion of one of these annual or semi-annual conferences a little different situation confronts the people. They are in need of a little different line of advice; and I felt, as President Grant gave his opening speech, that we had heard the right word, and that it only remained for us to follow the good advice, and that the work of the Lord, spiritually and temporally, in this intermountain country, would be greatly heightened thereby, I think the one thing that we need, perhaps more than any other, is obedience. Our third article of faith declares that salvation by the atonement is conditioned upon obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Another article of faith calls for obedience to the sovereign civil power and its laws. Many of the evils of the day result from the lack of obedience to the gospel and to the laws which govern us. Our modern scriptures, the revelations unto the Prophet Joseph Smith, are particularly strong in expressions as to the necessity of obedience, in order for us to have the benefit of the great sacrifice made by our Lord and Redeemer. In simplest form, perhaps, it is expressed thus: "My blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not."

In the Old Testament there are many strong passages indicating the necessity of obedience in order for us to have the benefit of the principles of the gospel and of the atonement and of the promises. When our brother quoted from the Book of Mormon, from Alma, I thought of a similar doctrine, as expressed in the eleventh chapter of Deuteronomy, in the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verses, that there would be a blessing by obedience, and a curse for those who did not obey. We have some very striking examples in scripture of the view which the Lord took of disobedience. In the instance of the taking of Jericho, the very taking of it was based upon obedience. It would not have been sufficient if they had not complied with the direction as to the number of times that they should march around the city before it would be their privilege to take it. They were under strict command that it was not an expedition for spoils, and when one Achan disregarded that injunction and had to confess later that he had within his tent, the Babylonish robe, and the wedge of gold, and the shekels of silver, he was taken out and stoned by his comrades, because they realized then the necessity of obedience. King Saul no doubt learned his bitter lesson when the same rule applied to him, that it was not an expedition for private profit that he entered upon in proceeding against one of the heathen nations that merited destruction. When there could be heard the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle, which he had saved contrary to instructions, and he felt that

he had incurred the displeasure of Samuel and also of the Lord, how deep must have been his regret; how he would have retained Samuel to have him, if possible, wipe out the penalty for the act of disobedience. Another instance is the healing of the blind man by bathing in the pool under the directions of the Savior. Of course, he could not have received his sight by disobeying or any failure to comply with the directions that had been given him whereby he might receive his sight. So, not only in the Church, but in the family circle, there is need of obedience. If time permitted I think we might read with profit at this point, the second epistle of the Apostle Paul to his "son in the common faith," as he called Titus, but time will not permit. Let the Latter-day Saints read this scripture and read more of the scriptures, for I feel that there is great profit to us in so doing.

We are living in a time of commotion. We are still in the struggle of what has been called the "back-wash of the war." It is a time of unsettled conditions. The right of suffrage has been widely extended throughout the earth. There has come within the scope of governmental powers increased duties and increased powers, and men are trying to keep their bearings by fixing their gaze upon the land marks. I thank the Lord for the marks that we have in this latter-day revealed religion of ours; that we have been kept steady, just as an ex-secretary of state found during the war evidences of steadiness here among our people. We might now have fewer instances of suffering and more evidences that we are prepared to stand not only the shock of war but the shock of war's aftermath, if there had been more obedience. People have passed through a stressful time during the last few years. You people within the sound of my voice can testify to that, if not from personal experience, from the instances in the lives of your friends, some of whom have gone down in the financial struggle. I know of one instance of creditors pursuing their debtor, and after the struggle of the debtor had been so severe that he in the meridian of his life had been a victim of adverse circumstances, and had given his life as forfeit, the merciful creditor then greatly rejoiced. In speaking to me of it, he expressed great joy that he had exercised mercy and forbearance and had not contributed in any way to the untimely taking off of his brother. Some find themselves in the position they now are in as the result of disobedience, failure to hearken to the counsel of their stake presidents. I know of some neighborhoods where there is financial distress, and the people feel the pinch of indebtedness, just now as a result of failing to obey the caution given them by their respective stake presidents. I feel sure that the remedy has been offered for any little, or any considerable, inconvenience that the people may be passing through just now, if they will hearken to the voice of our prophet, seer and revelator. You are familiar with the story of the necessity for the cleaning up of a municipality in olden times, in order to properly receive certain guests; and the consideration

by the municipal authorities as to how they could do it upon short notice. Someone suggested that each one clean in front of his own property. That is all we have to do, it seems to me, each one of us, whether we belong to the Church or not, each one to whom this message of the opening address of this conference comes, to be obedient, to give heed to the suggestions, and the distress and discomfort, if any exists, will surely disappear.

I rejoice in the blessings and truths of the gospel. I felt, as Elder Widtsoe gave his testimony at the opening of his speech this morning, that that would be my testimony, and I would like it as such, without taking your time more to repeat it. I would simply like to make his testimony and the testimony of others of the brethren whom we have listened to today, my testimony. I rejoice in the knowledge of the truth. I marvel as I read the scriptures at the evidences that have been given, line upon line, chapter upon chapter, section upon section, of the fact that Joseph Smith was indeed a prophet of God: that not only knowledge, but wisdom dwelt with him. Someone has given us the distinction between the two and said: "Knowledge dwells in heads replete with thoughts of other men: wisdom in minds attentive to their own. Knowledge is proud that it knows so much; wisdom is humble that it knows no more."

We can learn even from that people whose representatives were referred to by Elder Widtsoe. I have often admired the emphasis they place upon honoring parents. They have said that out of a hundred virtues, the first to be listed would be "filial piety," the honoring of parenthood; and they also said that "out of ten thousand evils, lewdness would be placed as the first," as the most offensive.

May the Lord bless us and help us to be obedient to the will of our Father, and to live according to the conditions upon which blessings are predicated, that we may be the happy recipients of the same, I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

Elder Hart has asked you to read from the scripture. I thought I would do the same; and then while considering it, I believe that nine out of ten of you would not do it, so I am going to read an entire section of the Doctrine and Covenants: Remember this is the word of the Lord Almighty, a revelation from God to his people, the very first section in the Doctrine and Covenants:

Hearken. O ye people of my church, saith the voice of him who dwells on high, and whose eyes are upon all men; yea, verily I say, hearken ye people from afar, and ye that are upon the islands of the sea, listen together.

For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape, and there is no eye that shall not see, neither ear that shall not hear, neither heart that shall not be penetrated.