

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

(Of the First Council of Seventy)

I am quite sure that we have all been impressed by the remarks of our brethren on the great increase of crime and sin in the world at large and the growing spirit of lawlessness—disregard for the laws of the land. This spirit is so prevalent that it even menaces the safety of our own great nation, say nothing about the other nations of the world. When I read in the newspapers that the lawless elements are gaining control of the offices, both executive and judicial, in our great cities, appointing police and judges friendly to their criminal enterprises, and contemplate the general disregard for law and order now threatening our municipal governments in the leading cities of our fair land, it occurs to me that we are living in perilous times, "when iniquity shall abound"—in the days that we read about in the scriptures, and concerning which the Savior of the world said, when He had been asked to give to His apostles the sign of His second coming and of the destruction of the world: "For then shall be great tribulations, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." These impending evils, iniquity, and sin, that are so rampant in all the world cannot fail to have some effect upon us, for we are more or less in contact with that world of sin. The Latter-day Saints ought to be in complete accord and harmony with every movement that is made to combat the progress of sin. We say to every organization and to every man who lifts up his voice and stretches forth his hand to stem the tide of evil: "You are engaged in a glorious work. God bless you in every such undertaking." But of all these agencies—and there are many of them—there is only one that is adequate to overcome the sin of the world, and that is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ administered by the Church of our Redeemer established in the earth for that express purpose, that we might overcome this world of sin. How may we then properly equip ourselves to meet the arch enemy of God and his legions that are abroad in the world, luring men and women away from the path of rectitude into the paths of sin and down to degradation and destruction? How can men and women be properly equipped in order that they may combat evil when the enemy shall make an attack upon them individually? For even the elect are not safe, but it is comforting and pleasing to contemplate that we shall not have to endure the great trials and tribulations that shall come to the world for any great extended length of time, because, we are told, "for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Were it otherwise, no flesh would be saved. It matters not how strong we may feel ourselves to be.

It matters not what position we may occupy in the Church or out of it. No man is so safe that he may boast of his own strength, but only

as God shall be our strength and come to our rescue, and then shorten the days, will we be able to overcome, and finally gain the victory; at least, that is the way I read the holy scripture. And what is the equipment? Can, you, then, or can I, or can any human soul in all the world, combat and overcome the temptations of the present day in and of ourselves without being properly equipped for that great struggle? I answer "No, we cannot." We need the help of God. We need the companionship or His Holy Spirit. Without these we cannot succeed. And how shall we obtain that help; and how secure this holy companionship? Through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ: Faith in God and in His only Begotten Son—faith in the efficacy of His redeeming blood that was shed for the sins of all mankind; through sincere repentance from sin; with a broken heart and contrite spirit exercise our own powers of resistance. Then be baptized by immersion for the remission of sins by a servant of God who has been endowed with power from on high, divinely authorized to perform that holy ordinance. Then, and not until then, may we receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, without which no man can overcome the sins of the world. The Spirit of God will not dwell in an unclean tabernacle. The gift of the Holy Ghost cannot be secured until our sins have been washed away by baptism, through the atoning blood of the Lamb of God.

This is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the equipment that every soul must have, if he shall combat the sins of this world and overcome them. So we say to all the world: Repent and be baptized, every one of you; believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept of Him as the very Son of God, who gave His life to overcome death and the grave and redeem mankind from their fallen condition. Do this that you may receive the Spirit of the Lord and thereby be prepared to fight the good fight of faith and overcome the power of the adversary. Let me say further, that "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Oh, ye inhabitants of the earth, wherever you may be, turn to the Lord and repent of sin and accept of the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me say to Latter-day Saints, repent of your sins, be they great or be they small, accept the counsels that are given to us from the presiding authorities of the Church, and if we have committed sin, be it great or small, let us turn to the Lord. If we have failed in the payment of our tithes and our offerings, if we have failed in the observance of the Word of Wisdom, let us repent and turn away from neglect of duty. If we have in any way offended the Lord or done aught amiss, let us turn to Him through repentance, and He will forgive and grant us His Holy Spirit that we may not lose its companionship, for we need that companionship every day of our lives that we may be prepared to meet the enemy wherever he may assail us.

The only adequate means of combatting the sins of the world, then, is obedience to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the only adequate agency is His Church which, on account of a universal apostasy,

was withdrawn from the world, but, thanks be unto Him, has again been restored to the earth through the instrumentality of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It is the only Church endowed with power from on high authorized to administer the saving ordinances of His gospel, including the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost without which not even the elect can hope to gain the victory.

Then, beware of sin, oh, ye sons and daughters of Zion! Adhere to the faith of your fathers; secure for yourselves the companionship of the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves unspotted from the sins of the world, for the adversary is seeking your destruction. An unvirtuous youth or maiden is like fruit without flavor, or the flower that hath no fragrance, or the salt that hath lost its savor, "thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men."

Through the laying on of hands by a duly authorized servant of God the Holy Spirit is conferred upon us as a gift from God. This entitles us to its constant companionship, but only so long as we retain the remission of our sins, and this we may retain by virtue of our baptism, just so long as we continue in the good fight of faith, and if we endure unto the end of our lives then shall we gain the victory over sin, notwithstanding our many weaknesses and shortcomings.

God bless the Latter-day Saints. May they grow in the knowledge of Him, and in good works. Good bless the youth of Zion. Shield and protect them from the power of evil. May they not fall into by and forbidden ways. God bless His children everywhere, the honest in heart in every land, and lead them into His fold. May they, through obedience to His gospel, secure the remission of their sins and the glorious companionship of His Holy Spirit. And may we all, thus equipped for the battle of life, gain the victory over sin and secure unto ourselves the crown of eternal life and unto Thee, O Lord, we will give the honor and glory through Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT

President Heber J. Grant read the following report of the Church Auditing Committee:

AUDITING COMMITTEE'S REPORT

April 4, 1922

PRESIDENT HEBER J. GRANT,
TRUSTEE-IN-TRUST.

Dear Brother: We have pleasure in reporting to you that the books of the Trustee-in-Trust and the Presiding Bishop's Office have been audited in detail month by month for the year 1921. The compiled report for these two offices also has been carefully audited for the same period.

We have pleasure also in certifying to you that the accounts for the year 1921 were accurately kept and that the books are in good condition.